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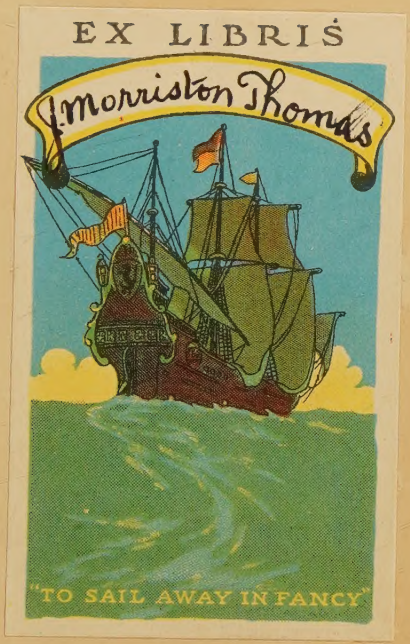
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"TO SAIL AWAY IN FANCY"

THE LIVES OF S. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

ST. FRANCIS

(ANDREA DELLA ROBBIA)

From a Statue in the Church of S. Maria degli Angeli, Assisi

THE LIVES OF S. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

BY

BROTHER THOMAS OF CELANO

TRANSLATED BY

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TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

WITH A FRONTISPIECE

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INTRODUCTION

THOMAS OF CELANO AND HIS WRITINGS

VERY little is known of the life of Thomas of Celano. He was a native of that town, which is on the Southern border of the Abruzzi, in the diocese of Marsica, and close to the (now drained) lake of Fucino. The notion that his birthplace was Cellino in the neighbouring diocese of Penna is incorrect (d'Alençon,[1] ix.-xii.). The date of his birth and the name of his family are unknown. He was probably admitted by S. Francis to the Order at S. Maria de Portiuncula some time between 1213 and 1216 (d'Alençon, xiii; Goetz, *Die Quellen zur Geschichte des hl. Franz von Assisi*, p. 61 *n.* 5), after the Saint's return from his vain attempt to visit Morocco. It can hardly be doubted that Thomas refers to this in the First Life (I., 56, 57) where, after intimating that God in frustrating S. Francis' attempt had had the good of "himself (Thomas) and of many" in view, he speaks of "some learned men and some of noble birth" who joined S. Francis "most acceptably".

[1] See Translator's note below, page xxiv.

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Thomas, no doubt, belonged to the former class. It was a new thing in those days for the learned and the noble to join the Order, and Thomas and his companions might at first have felt a little out of their element, had not the exquisite tact and courtesy of S. Francis, to which Thomas alludes in this passage, made his new disciples at home in their strange surroundings. Thomas may have been the sick brother who with others was turned out of the "house of the Brethren" at Bologna as stated in II., 58, and there may again be a personal reference in the story (II., 195) of the Brother who was over-careful about preaching, and was warned by S. Francis to walk in the way of simplicity. In 1221 Thomas was sent to Germany under Caesarius of Spires, the Provincial Minister: in 1222 he was appointed Custos of the convents of Mainz, Worms, Cologne and Spires, and immediately afterwards, on Caesarius' return to Italy, was left in charge of the province of Germany as Caesarius' vicar. Thomas remained in Germany at least until the autumn of 1223, for he was present at a Chapter held at Spires on 8th September in that year, under Caesarius' successor Albert of Pisa. The date of his return to Italy is not known, but he was certainly present at the canonization of S. Francis on 16th July,

1228, between which date and February, 1229, he wrote the First Life of S. Francis by commission of Pope Gregory IX. He was at Assisi in May, 1230, at the time of the translation of S. Francis' body from the church of S. Giorgio, where it was first laid, to the new church that had been built for its reception by Brother Elias.[1] Of the remainder of his life, beyond the fact that he wrote the Second Life of S. Francis, on the commission of Crescentius of Jesi, the Minister-General of the Order, between 1244 and 1247, nothing certain is known. According to d'Alençon (*op. cit.*, xviii., xix.) he ended his days as spiritual director of a monastery of Clarisses, near Tagliacozzo (about sixteen miles from Celano), in which monastery he was buried. Subsequently, after the abandonment of the monastery towards the end of the fifteenth century, his remains were brought to the church of S. Francis at Tagliacozzo, where they are now reverently preserved.

The treatise on the Miracles of S. Francis printed by d'Alençon with the two "Lives" in his edition referred to in the Note (p. xxiv.), was

[1] The church of S. Giorgio was afterwards incorporated with the church of Santa Chiara. For the strange circumstances of the translation see Lempp, *Frère Elie de Cortone*, p. 82 ff.; and L. Duff-Gordon, *The Story of Assisi*, pp. 133-136. The actual resting-place of S. Francis was not discovered till 1818.

probably composed after 1255 : it is a collection of miraculous stories connected with the Saint, including many of those comprised in the two "Lives," and is perhaps also the work of Thomas of Celano : but it cannot be assigned to him with absolute certainty ; and Goetz (p. 236 *n.* 2) gives reasons for attributing it to Brother Julian of Spires. If it really is by Thomas it may perhaps be regarded as the "second treatise" in completion of the Second Life, which he wrote at the bidding of John of Parma (Minister-General from 1247 to 1257) according to the Chronicle of the Twenty-four Generals (*Analecta Franciscana*, iii., 276), a fourteenth-century authority. What has been said as to Celano's authorship of the treatise on the Miracles may also be said as to his authorship of the Life of S. Clara, written between 1255 and 1261 and printed in the Acta Sanctorum.

Three liturgical works by Thomas of Celano are also appended to d'Alençon's edition of the "Lives," *viz.*, a *Legenda breviata ad usum chori*, which is an abridged account of S. Francis intended for reading in church ; and two sequences in honour of the Saint : *Sanctitatis nova signa*, and *Fregit victor virtualis*. The common attribution to Thomas of Celano of the famous sequence *Dies irae, dies illa* is probably cor-

rect; and if it cannot be proved to demonstration that he wrote it, at least he has a better claim to be its author than any of the other persons to whom it has been ascribed (see Ermini, *Il Dies Irae e l'innologia ascetica nel secolo decimoterzo*, pp. 5, 11 ff.). Returning now to the two "Lives of S. Francis," it is in the first place to be observed that Thomas of Celano, though he had some personal recollections of S. Francis (*cf.* Preface to the First Life, below, p. 1), was in all probability absent from Italy during the closing years of the Saint's life; and indeed in I., 88, where he sets about describing the last two years of S. Francis' life, and his death, his use of the expression, *prout potuimus recte scire* ("as we have been able to learn rightly"), seems to amount to a disclaimer of personal knowledge (*cf.* I., 115). In any case he did not belong to the inner circle of the Saint's closest companions. He was however in entire sympathy with them (see I., 102, 104), and we cannot doubt that they furnished him with much of the material of which the First Life is composed (see, for instance, I., 115). As regards the Second Life, which is in the nature of a supplement to the First, the Saint's trusted Companions occupy a more prominent position. We might almost go so far as to describe them as the

authors of the work, and Thomas as the editor who cast their material into a literary form, adding somewhat of his own. This is made especially clear in the Preface (II., 1) and the concluding prayer (II., 221-224), where Thomas of Celano, the writer, is manifestly speaking as the mouthpiece of the Companions, who through him refer in the Preface to their constant familiar intercourse with S. Francis, and in the prayer entreat the Saint on behalf of "this thy son who now and before has written thy praises. Together with us (they say) he offers and dedicates to thee this little work which he has put together," etc. (*cf.* the prayers in I., 118, 151). Moreover, in the Second Life the use of the first person singular generally marks off the utterances of Thomas from those of the Companions, which he puts into the first person plural. Compare, for instance, the use of the first person singular in II., 26, 93, 95, 100 with that of the first person plural in II., 1, 2, 64, 94, 127, 182.

The material for the Second Life which the Companions brought to Thomas was partly oral and partly written ; and of the written, a considerable portion consisted of the original stuff of the *Speculum Perfectionis*, which in its existing form as published by Sabatier is possibly of as late

a date as 1318[1] (d'Alençon, p. xxxvi. *n.* 1; *cf.* Goetz, pp. 148-151), though containing a great deal of "old valuable material derived from the Saint's trusted companions, or from Brother Leo alone" (Goetz, p. 220). The relations between the *Speculum Perfectionis* and Celano's Second Life have been very thoroughly investigated by Goetz in the work already cited, which the reader who wishes to study the subject is strongly advised to consult. The position is admirably summed up by M. Barbi in a valuable article in the *Bullettino della Società dantesca italiana* (N.S., vol. xii., p. 100). He says: "This work (the *Speculum Perfectionis*) and Celano's Second Life throw light on one another; and it is wrong to set one in opposition to the other, or exalt one at the expense of the other. The *Speculum Perfectionis* gives a warmer and livelier narrative, but derives from the Second Life by Celano the confirmation of the authenticity and antiquity of the greater part of its material." The notion that the second part of the Second Life (which begins at § 26) is later in date than the first part is erroneous (Barbi, *l.c.*, p. 99 *n.* 1).

[1] The form of the *Speculum Perfectionis* published by Fr. Lemmens as *Speculum Perfectionis Redactio* i. (Quaracchi, 1901), is believed by Goetz to be later than Sabatier's *Speculum Perfectionis*. D'Alençon (p. xxxvi. *n.*) is inclined to believe it to be earlier, while admitting that it is not the primary form of the work.

With regard to the intricate question of the relation between the *Legenda Trium Sociorum* and Celano's Second Life, I must refer the student to Goetz' exhaustive discussion of the subject (pp. 91-140) and content myself with observing that Goetz has very seriously shaken the position of those who maintain that Celano made use of the *Legenda* for his Second Life; and that there seem to be fewer difficulties to contend with in holding that the *Legenda* is to a great extent compiled from Celano's two "Lives" than in holding that the Second Life contains matter borrowed from the *Legenda.*

As regards the relation of the Second Life to the First, the Second, as Goetz remarks (p. 80) is exactly what it professes to be, a supplement to the First: the repetitions in it of matters already dealt with are few, and mainly in the nature of summary statements inserted for the sake of coherency: nor is there, as some have alleged, a radical change of view on the part of Thomas concerning the ideal of S. Francis. As Goetz very well puts it (p. 84): "The Second Life does not indicate that its author had in the meantime remorsefully learnt to embrace the Saint's ideal; much rather does it show how deeply in the meantime the ideal had decayed, and in how many

matters stern admonition was needed". The cardinal points of S. Francis' teaching are clearly expressed in the First Life: they are strongly accentuated in the Second. Those who charge Thomas of Celano with blamable inconsistency dwell especially on his treatment of Brother Elias in the First Life as contrasted with his treatment of him in the Second. Let us see what this really amounts to. In I., 69 we are told how Brother Elias persuaded the Saint to speak to a woman out of whom he had cast a devil some time before. In I., 95 Elias is said to have been "happy" in that he deserved "somehow" to see the wound in S. Francis' side, while in II., 138 the rather mean trick by which Elias contrived to do so is mentioned. In I., 98 we read how Elias, "whom S. Francis had chosen for himself in the stead of a mother and had made a father to the other brethren," persuaded S. Francis to resort to medicine. In I., 105 we are told how, in the dangerous aggravation of S. Francis' illness at Siena, Elias hurried thither from afar and at the Saint's request made the arrangements for bringing him back to Assisi. In I., 108 the dying S. Francis in blessing the other brethren bestows a special blessing on Elias, crossing his hands so that his right hand may rest on Elias' head:

while in II., 216 the blessing of the brethren is briefly referred to, and it is stated that S. Francis "stretched out his right hand over the brethren who sat around, and, beginning with his Vicar (*i.e.*, Elias) laid it on the head of each one," and words are added (found however in one only of the two extant MSS. of the Second Life) referring to the earlier account of the blessing, and explaining in what sense it is to be understood. Lastly in I., 109 we have a story of a vision seen by Elias wherein it was revealed that S. Francis would live but two years longer. In the Second Life Elias is not mentioned by name. The Saint's Vicar is spoken of in II., 28, 34, 144, 207, but in these places it is doubtful whether Elias or Peter Cathanii (who filled that office from September, 1220, till his death on 10th March, 1221) is referred to. Now it is certain that an examination of the above passages where Elias is mentioned and referred to, discloses a change of feeling on the writer's part toward Elias: but is he therefore to be charged with blamable inconsistency? When we remember the indignation which Elias' administration of the Order aroused in the easy-going Brother Salimbene,[1] we can form some

[1] See his "Liber de Prælato" (*Monumenta Germaniæ Historica*, xxxii., 63-136), and Coulton, *From S. Francis to Dante*, ch. vii. This work includes a translation of all the important items in Salimbene.

idea of the horror and loathing with which Thomas of Celano and the Companions of S. Francis would regard his conduct as Minister-General, not to speak of his subsequent apostasy. On the other hand, what wonder is it if in the First Life Thomas should express himself as he does concerning Elias? After all, Elias had enjoyed in a high degree the confidence of S. Francis, over whom, however strange it may seem, he had great influence. He had been chosen as the Saint's Vicar on Peter Cathanii's death, and acted as such until S. Francis' death; and even afterwards, though John Parenti was appointed Minister-General, Elias continued to exert a great influence on the affairs of the Order (see Lempp, *op. cit.*, p. 69 ff.). Further, as Tilemann suggests (*Speculum Perfectionis und Legenda Trium Sociorum*, pp. 26, 27), Thomas of Celano's absence from Italy during the close of S. Francis' life may have caused him to be imperfectly acquainted with Elias' true character and aims, and to be more strongly influenced by him than might otherwise have been the case. And if it be still thought that in the First Life Thomas shows himself too complaisant to Elias, it must not be forgotten that in I., 106 he gives us S. Francis' emphatic commendation of "the place of the Church

of S. Maria in Portiuncula" with his exhortation to the brethren never to forsake it. Now this "place," as Sabatier observes (*Speculum Perfectionis*, p. 164 *n.* 1), was "not only the headquarters of the opposition to Elias but also the symbol of the faithful observance of the Rule". The citation of S. Francis' Testament in I. 17 is also significant.

It seems desirable in connection with this subject to add a word about the alleged inconsistency between I., 108, and II., 184. The blessing on Elias, as set out in the former passage, amounts (it is said) to a designation of him as S. Francis' successor as Minister-General, which appears to clash with what we are told in the latter passage, *viz.*, that S. Francis when asked shortly before his death to point out a man who might be intrusted with the office of Minister-General declared that he knew of no fit person, and then (II., 185) proceeded to give a description of an ideal Minister-General. This is no doubt a considerable difficulty, but, even admitting that the blessing in I., 108 amounts to a designation of Elias as S. Francis' successor, we might perhaps reconcile the discrepancy between this passage and II., 184 by supposing, as we very well may, that S. Francis considered Brother Elias as the best Minister-General in the actual state of affairs; though he

knew him not to be his ideal Minister, and told the brother who questioned him, that he knew of none who had all the requisite qualifications.

Thomas of Celano's style is ornate and rhetorical, and the judicious reader who keeps his eyes open will soon learn to make the necessary allowances for the latter quality. He is fond of jingling collocations of words, of antitheses, and plays on words, and he oscillates in a very curious way between redundancy and terseness. In the epigrammatic vein he is sometimes very felicitous (see, for instance, II., 75). He has his Bible (the Vulgate, of course) at his fingers' ends and his pages are saturated with the phraseology of Holy Scripture.[1]

The subject of Thomas of Celano's indebtedness to other writers has been carefully investigated by Professor Tamassia in his recent book *S. Francesco d'Assisi e la sua leggenda* (Padua and Verona, 1906), and a number of interesting parallels from other authors are referred to and in many cases quoted by him. Some of these passages are far-fetched, illusory, or disputable, considered as sources of Thomas' work; but a fair number warrant the conclusion that Thomas

[1] I have only given references when the Biblical quotations or allusions seemed particularly significant.

had them consciously or unconsciously in his mind while elaborating his book. But Tamassia goes a great deal further than this, and contends that Thomas of Celano, with the deliberate intention of smothering S. Francis' individuality under the commonplaces of mediæval hagiography, set himself to compose a patchwork from S. Gregory, Sulpicius Severus, Cassianus, Caesarius of Heisterbach, etc., etc., and represent it as a true account of S. Francis; the result of which is that his two "Lives of S. Francis" are to a great extent destitute of any historical value whatever. "Some fragments of truth" are all that Tamassia seems to concede even to the First Life (*op. cit.*, p. 187), while the Second he describes as being "perhaps the masterpiece of monkish imposture in the thirteenth century" (*ib.*, pp. 109, 110). Of the evidence he brings forward to support this remarkable theory each reader must of course form his own judgment; to me it seems insufficient to establish his case. Moreover, one is inclined to doubt his qualifications as a judge of Thomas of Celano's character when one finds him speaking (p. 187) of Thomas' "mania for putting himself forward" —Thomas who does not once mention his own name and whose allusions to his own life are so faint as to be almost imperceptible. But, after

all, the manifest failure of Thomas in his alleged purpose of conventionalizing the figure of S. Francis appears to be a conclusive refutation of Tamassia's contention; for Tamassia acknowledges the consummate skill of Thomas of Celano, and if with his consummate skill he has so conspicuously failed to achieve his supposed purpose, it seems not unfair to infer that this purpose was non-existent.

But the reader must not expect to find in Celano's "Lives" what he looks for in a modern biography. The primary object of the author and his colleagues is to edify the Brethren by putting before them selected incidents and sayings illustrating S. Francis' life and character (see II., 2). He is set forth as their example. To this end everything is subordinated. Chronological order is not essential to it and is therefore to a great extent disregarded; indications of time, and names of persons and places are often omitted; and events, the narration of which would be unedifying (for instance, the trouble in the Order during the Saint's absence in Egypt and the Holy Land) are passed over in silence. Miracles, moreover, were demanded as the credentials of Francis' sanctity, and the demand had to be met. The miraculous element is more pro-

nounced in the Second Life than in the First (compare *e.g.*, I., 17 with II., 9, and I., 18 with II., 13), which is only natural. As Goetz remarks (p. 232) "in the First Life, Francis appears as an extraordinary man: in the Second, as a Saint". And due allowance must be made for this change in the presentment of him. Thus the very much mitigated account of S. Francis' earliest years in II., 3, as compared with that in I., 1, 2, can only be due to a desire to make out that he was in some sort consecrated to God even from his birth. On the whole, however, Thomas is less prodigal of miraculous adjuncts than might have been expected, and is not unconscious that some discretion is needed in admitting portents into his narrative (see I., 138). And there is a laudable absence of the trivial, childish and grotesque miracles which abound in the diverting pages of Caesarius of Heisterbach, one of the authors on whom, according to Tamassia, he founded himself. In conclusion, I do not think that one can study Thomas of Celano's "Lives" without being convinced that, making the necessary allowances I have indicated, they constitute a truthful and not unworthy memorial of that Christ-like life and character that have endeared S. Francis to men of every age and of every religious persuasion.

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PRINCIPAL DATES IN S. FRANCIS' LIFE

1182.	Birth of S. Francis.
1202-1203.	Captivity at Perugia.
1204-1206.	Conversion from the world.
1207-1209.	Repairs the churches of S. Damian and S. Maria de Portiuncula (S. Maria degli Angeli).
1209.	Begins to preach: is joined by the first brethren.
1210.	With eleven brethren he receives the tonsure at Rome. His Rule verbally approved by Pope Innocent III.
1211.	S. Maria de Portiuncula given by the Benedictines for the use of S. Francis and his brethren.
1217.	The brethren first sent to preach in foreign countries. S. Francis pleads his cause before Pope Honorius III.
1219-1220.	Visit to Egypt and the Holy Land.
1220, *22nd September.*	Bull of Honorius III. imposing a year's novitiate on all who would enter the Order.
Michaelmas.	S. Francis resigns his office of Minister-General; the Order passes under the control of the Holy See.
1223, *29th November.*	The Rule, after having undergone various modifications, is confirmed by Bull of Honorius III.
1224, *15th August* to *30th September.*	The forty days' fast on Alverna.
1226, *3rd-4th October.*	Death of S. Francis.
1228, *16th July.*	His canonization by Pope Gregory IX.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

THE present translation is based on the text of the most recent edition of the original, that by Fr. E. d'Alençon (*S. Francisci Assisiensis Vita et Miracula*, Rome, Desclée, Lefebvre et Cie., 1906). In the prolegomena to this edition full information as to the MSS. and previous editions will be found.

In the Introduction and notes to the present volume the Roman figures I., II. refer to the First and the Second Life respectively, and the Arabic figures refer to the numbered paragraphs in the two "Lives".

The numbering of the chapters in Part II. of the Second Life is that of d'Alençon's edition, which differs from that of Amoni's edition (Rome, 1880) as follows:—

d'Alençon.		Amoni.	
Part II., c. 1, 2, 3	corresponds to	Part II., c. 1	
„ „ 4-24	„ „	„ „	2-22
„ „ 25	„ „	Part III., c. 1	
„ „ 26-48	„ „	„ „	2-24
„ „ 49	„ „	„ „	25, 26
„ „ 50-161	„ „	„ „	27-138
„ „ 162, 163	„ „	„ „	139
„ „ 164-167	„ „	„ „	140-143

THE LIVES OF S. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

THE FIRST LIFE OF S. FRANCIS

IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, AMEN. HERE BEGINS THE PREFACE TO THE LIFE OF BLESSED FRANCIS

DESIRING to relate in order, with pious devotion and under the constant guidance and teaching of truth, the acts and life of our most blessed father Francis, it has been my endeavour, at the bidding of the lord and glorious Pope Gregory, to set forth to the best of my ability (though with unskilled words) at least those things that I have heard from blessed Francis' own mouth or have understood from faithful and approved witnesses, since the memory of none can retain all that he did and taught. But would that I might deserve to be the disciple of him who always avoided dark sayings and knew no pomp of words!

I have divided the whole of what I have been able to gather concerning that blessed man into three parts, arranging everything in single chapters, so that differences in time might not confuse the order of events and bring the truth into doubt. The first part accordingly keeps to the historical order and is principally devoted to the purity of his blessed conversation and life, to his holy character, and his wholesome teaching. In this

part are also inserted a few out of the many miracles which the Lord our God deigned to work by him, while he was living in the flesh.

The second part relates the events from the last year but one of his life until his happy death. The third contains many, and omits more, of the miracles which the glorious Saint, reigning with Christ in the heavens is working on earth. It also recounts the reverence, honour, praise and glory which the happy Pope Gregory, and with him all the Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, most devoutly paid to him by enrolling him in the number of the Saints. Thanks be to Almighty God, Who ever in His Saints shows Himself worthy of admiration and love!

TO THE PRAISE AND GLORY OF ALMIGHTY GOD, THE FATHER, SON, AND HOLY GHOST, AMEN. HERE BEGINS THE LIFE OF OUR MOST BLESSED FATHER FRANCIS.

PART I

CHAPTER I

How he bore himself in the worldly habit and mind

1. THERE was in the city of Assisi, which stands on the borders of the valley of Spoleto, a man named Francis, who from his earliest years was brought up by his parents frowardly, according to the vanity of the world; and, by long imitation of their wretched life and conduct he became himself still more vain and froward. For this wicked custom has so taken root everywhere among those who bear the Christian name, and this pernicious doctrine is everywhere so settled

and established as though by public law, that men purposely bring up their children even from the cradle with excessive carelessness and laxity. For at first, when they are beginning to speak or rather to lisp, little children only just born are taught by signs and sounds certain very shameful and detestable things, and when they are weaned they are forced not only to say but even to do actions full of lust and wantonness. Being compelled by the fear which is natural to their age, not one of them dares to behave virtuously, for this subjects them to harsh punishments. Well, therefore, says a secular poet: "Because we have grown up amid our parents' practices, therefore [even] from childhood all evils pursue us". This witness is true: for the more fully the parents' wishes have been realised, the more harmful is it for their children. But after all, when the children are a little older they always fall into worse conduct still, of their own impulse. For a corrupt tree grows from a corrupt root, and what has once been thoroughly depraved can scarce be brought back to the rule of uprightness. But when they have begun to enter the gates of youth what manner of persons think you that they become? Then indeed, plunging into every kind of debauchery (since they are free to fulfil all their pleasure) they give themselves over with all their might to the service of wickedness. For, having thus become by voluntary servitude the slaves of sin, they yield all their members as instruments for iniquity, and, showing forth nothing of the Christian religion in their life and conduct, shelter themselves under the mere name of Christianity. (2) These wretches often pretend that they have done

things more wicked than they really have, lest they should seem more contemptible in proportion to their innocence.

Such are the miserable rudiments wherewith that man, whom to-day we revere as a saint because he truly is a saint, was familiar from boyhood; and almost until the twenty-fifth year of his age he miserably squandered and wasted his time. Nay, surpassing all his coevals in his bad progress in vanity, he proved in more abundant measure an instigator of evil deeds and a zealot in folly. He was the admiration of all; and in pomp of vainglory he strove to surpass the rest in frolics, freaks, sallies of wit and idle talk, songs, and soft and flowing attire, for he was very rich. He was not miserly but prodigal, not a hoarder of money but a squanderer of his substance, a shrewd trader but a most ostentatious spender; a man, however, very kindly in his dealings, very easy and affable, though this became foolishness to him, for his attractive disposition was the chief cause that many went after him who were promoters of evil-doing and inciters to crime. And so, compassed about with the troops of the wicked, haughty and uplifted he strutted along amid the open places of Babylon until the Lord looked down from heaven and for His name's sake removed His fury far from him, and curbed his tongue with His praise, that he might not perish utterly. Therefore the hand of the Lord came upon him, and the change wrought by the right hand of the Highest, that through him assurance of restoration to grace might be given to sinners, and that he might become to all a pattern of conversion to God.

CHAPTER II

How God visited his heart by sickness of body and a vision in the night

3. FOR in truth while this man in youthful heat was still fervent in sin, while the age of wantonness was urging him frowardly to fulfil the demands of youth, and while, not knowing how to restrain himself, he was stirred by the venom of the Old Serpent, suddenly the vengeance, or rather the unction of God came upon him and strove first to recall his erring senses by the infliction of distress of mind and discomfort of body according to the Prophet's word, "Behold I will hedge thy way with thorns and will compass it with a wall".[1] And so, worn by long sickness (as man's stubbornness deserves, which can scarce be amended but by chastisements), he began to muse on other than his wonted thoughts. And when now he was somewhat restored, after he had begun to walk about the house in order to recover his strength, leaning on a stick, one day he went abroad and began to look curiously on the landscape around. But neither the beauty of the fields, the pleasantness of the vineyards, nor anything that is fair to see could in anywise delight him. Wherefore he wondered at the sudden change in himself and began to deem the lovers of such things to be very fools; and from that day he began to despise himself and in some sort to hold in contempt what he had admired and loved before; (4) but not thoroughly nor truly, for he had not yet been loosed from the bonds of vanity nor had

[1] Hosea ii. 6.

he shaken off from his neck the yoke of perverse slavery. For it is very hard to forsake accustomed things, nor is it easy to sap the force of what has once been put into the mind. The mind which has been long secluded goes back to what it has first been taught, and vice by assiduity commonly becomes nature. Accordingly Francis as yet tried to fly from God's hand, and, heedless for a while of his Father's correction, turned his mind, amid the smiles of prosperity, to worldly things; and, ignorant of God's plan, still looked forward to great exploits of worldly glory and vanity. For a certain noble of the city of Assisi was making much ado with warlike preparations, and, puffed up by a gust of vainglory, vowed that he would go to Apulia, to make increased gain of money or honour. On hearing this, Francis, who was heady and not a little adventurous, agreed to go with this noble; being his inferior in birth, but his superior in mettle; poorer in pelf, but more lavish in largess.

5. One night therefore, after Francis had wholly determined to carry out this enterprise, and burning with desire was most eagerly longing to start on the journey, He who had smitten him with the rod of justice visited him in the sweetness of grace by a night vision, and since he coveted glory, drew him on and uplifted him by [showing him] the height of glory. For it seemed to him that he had his house full of warlike weapons, to wit, saddles, shields, lances and other accoutrements; and, greatly rejoicing he wondered in himself what this might be: for he had not been wont to see such things in his house, but rather, bales of cloth to sell. And, as he was not a little astonished at the sudden

occurrence, he was told that all these arms were his and his knights'. On awaking, he rose early with gladsome heart, and taking the vision to be a presage of great prosperity, felt sure that his journey to Apulia would be prosperous. For he knew not what he said and had as yet no knowledge of the gift bestowed on him from heaven. Yet he might have seen that his interpretation of this vision was not true, because though the vision bore some resemblance to the facts, his mind was nevertheless not wont to rejoice over such things as these. For he had to do some violence to himself in order that he might accomplish his design and carry out the journey he longed to take.

And indeed mention of arms here at the beginning is very beautifully made, and arms are very fittingly delivered to the knight about to do battle against the strong man armed, that like a second David he may in the name of the Lord God of hosts deliver Israel from the standing reproach of the foe.[1]

CHAPTER III

How, changed in mind but not in body, he spake allegorically of a treasure found, and of a Bride

6. BEING therefore changed (but in mind, not in body) he now refused to go to Apulia, and strove to turn his will to things divine. Accordingly he withdrew himself for awhile from the bustle and business of the world, and strove to lay up Jesus Christ in the inward man. Like a prudent merchant he concealed

[1] *Cf.* below, II., 6.

from the eyes of the deluded the pearl he had found, and endeavoured in secret to sell all he had and purchase it. There was a man in Assisi whom he loved above all the rest; and, since they were of the same age, and constant intercourse in mutual affection emboldened him to impart his secrets to this friend, he would often take him to places retired and suited for counsel, declaring that he had found a great and precious treasure. His friend rejoiced, and being eager about what he had heard, gladly accompanied Francis whenever he was invited. There was a cavern near the city to which they would often go, talking together about the treasure. The man of God (for he was already holy through his holy purpose) would go into the cavern, while his comrade waited outside; and, filled by a new and single spirit, would pray to his Father in secret. He longed that none should know what he was doing within, and, wisely taking occasion by the good to conceal the better, consulted God alone in his holy purpose. He prayed devoutly that the eternal and true God would direct his way, and teach him to do His will. He endured the utmost travail of spirit, nor could he rest until he should fulfil in deed what he had conceived in his heart. Various thoughts succeeded one another, and grievously troubled him by their importunity. Within he glowed with the Divine fire, nor could he hide the blaze which filled his mind from outward view. It repented him that he had sinned so grievously and offended in the sight of [God's] Majesty; neither the past evils, nor the present delighted him; but he had not yet fully received assurance that he would refrain from evil in the future. Wherefore when he came

back to his companion outside he was so worn out with travail that he seemed a different man from him who had gone in.

7. But one day when he had been most earnestly beseeching the Lord's mercy, the Lord showed him what he must do. And then he was filled with such joy that, unable to contain himself for gladness, even against his will he uttered somewhat of it to the ears of men. Yet, though for the greatness of the love wherewith he had been inspired he could not keep silence, he spoke in some sort warily and in riddles. For in the manner that he spoke to his special friend of a "hidden treasure" (as has been said) so also he strove to speak to others figuratively. He said that he would not go to Apulia but promised to do great and noble deeds in his native place. Men thought he wanted to marry a wife, and questioned him saying, "Francis, art thou going to take a wife?" But he would answer, "I will marry a nobler and fairer bride than you ever saw, who shall surpass all others in beauty and excel them in wisdom".

And verily the spotless Bride of God is the true Religion which he took unto him, and the "hidden treasure" is the Kingdom of Heaven, which he sought out with such great desire. For it was altogether necessary that the Gospel calling should be fulfilled in him who was to be a minister of the Gospel in faith and truth.

CHAPTER IV

How he sold all his goods and despised the money he got for them

8. THUS disposed, and strengthened by the Holy Ghost, the blessed servant of the Most High (for that the time appointed was come) followed that blessed impulse of his soul through which, by trampling on worldly things, the highest good is attained. He might no longer delay, for a deadly disease had now grown to such a height everywhere and had so laid hold on all the limbs of many, that, did the physician tarry but a little, it would choke the vital spirit and snatch away the life. He arose therefore, fortifying himself by the sign of the holy Cross; prepared his horse, mounted, and taking with him scarlet cloths to sell, came in haste to the city called Foligno. Here, having as usual sold all the goods he brought, the happy merchant left behind the horse he was riding, after receiving its price. So, having laid aside his burdens he turned back, and bethought him, with religious mind, what he should do with the money. Presently, being in wondrous fashion wholly turned to God's work, and feeling that to carry that money even for an hour would sorely oppress him, he hastened to get rid of it, deeming all the advantage of it to be as sand. And as he was returning toward Assisi, he found by the wayside a church which had been built of old in honour of S. Damian, but was threatening soon to fall from excessive age. (9) When Christ's new knight came to it he was moved with compassion for such need, and went in with awe and reverence. Find-

ing a poor priest there, he kissed his hands with great faith, offered him the money he was carrying, and set forth to him in order his purpose. The priest was amazed, and wondering at a change of circumstances incredibly sudden, refused to believe what he heard; and, thinking he was being hoaxed, he would not keep the offered money. For almost the day before (if I may say so) he had seen Francis living riotously among his kinsfolk and acquaintance and surpassing the others in folly. But Francis with obstinate persistence strove to gain credit for his words, praying and earnestly entreating the priest to let him stay with him for the Lord's sake. At last the priest agreed to this, but would not take the money for fear of Francis' parents; and the true despiser of money cast it on a window-sill, heeding it as little as dust. For he longed to possess wisdom which is better than gold, and to get prudence, which is more precious than silver.

CHAPTER V

How his father persecuted and bound him

10. SO while the servant of God Most High was dwelling in the aforesaid place his father went all round about like a diligent spy, wanting to know what was become of his son. And when he understood that his son was leading such a life in that place, being inwardly grieved at heart over the sudden turn of events, he was exceedingly enraged, and, having called his friends and neighbours together, flew to the place wherein the servant of God was dwelling. But

he (for that he was a new athlete of Christ) on hearing of the threats of his persecutors and getting wind of their coming, desiring to give place to wrath, plunged into a hidden pit that himself had made ready for the purpose. The pit (known perchance to one only) was in the house, and here he lay hid for a month so continuously that he durst hardly come forth for human need. When food was given him he ate it in the secrecy of the pit, and every service was rendered to him by stealth. He prayed constantly amid showers of tears that the Lord would deliver him from the hands of those who were persecuting his soul, and that in kindly favour He would fulfil his pious wishes. In fasting and weeping he besought the Saviour's clemency, and, distrusting his own efforts, cast all his care on the Lord. And, though he was in darkness and in the pit yet he was filled with an ineffable gladness of which till then he had had no experience, and, wholly fired by this gladness, he left the pit and exposed himself openly to his persecutors' curses.

11. Forthwith therefore he arose, bold, eager and active; and, bearing before him, in order to fight for the Lord, the shield of faith, armed moreover with a great confidence, he took his way toward the city, and, kindled with Divine heat, began severely to accuse himself of sluggishness and cowardice. When they saw this, all who knew him, comparing what he had been with what he now was, began to revile him miserably; they cried out on him as distraught and demented, and pelted him with mire and stones. They saw that he was changed from his former ways and greatly worn by maceration of the flesh, and therefore

they set down all he did to his privations and to madness. But (for that the patient man is better than the arrogant) the servant of God turned a deaf ear to all these things, and, unbroken and unchanged by any injuries, gave thanks for all to the Lord. For in vain does the unrighteous persecute one who is making for virtue, since the more he is buffeted the more mightily will he triumph. Indignity (as some one says) strengthens a generous spirit.

12. Now when such noise and rumour about him had been some time current in the open places and streets of the city, and the sound of those who mocked him was re-echoing hither and thither, the report of these things at length reached his father, among many others to whose ears it came. And when he heard his son's name, and that his fellow-citizens were treating him thus, he arose forthwith, not to deliver his son but rather to ruin him, and, casting all moderation aside, he rushed on him like a wolf on a sheep, and, looking at him with malign and cruel countenance, laid hands on him very shamelessly and disgracefully, and carried him off to his own house. And so, without any mercy, he shut him up for several days in a dark place, and thinking to bend his son's spirit to his own will, urged him at first by words, and then by stripes and chains. But this made Francis the readier and stronger to carry out his holy purpose, nor, though insulted by words and wearied by chains, did he flinch from endurance. For he who is bidden to rejoice in tribulation, though he be scourged and bound, can neither decline from his right intent and posture of mind, nor be led away from Christ's flock: nor does

he quake in the overflowing of many waters whose refuge in distress is the Son of God, Who, in order that we might not think our troubles hard, ever showed that those He endured were greater.

CHAPTER VI

How his mother released him, and how he stript himself before the Bishop of Assisi

13. WHEN his father had departed for awhile from his home on business, the man of God remained bound and in confinement in the house; but his mother, who had been left alone at home with him, disapproved of what her husband had done, and spoke to her son kindly. And though she saw that she could not recall him from his purpose, she yearned over him with maternal compassion, and she loosed his chains and let him go free. But he, giving thanks to Almighty God, returned to the place where he had been aroused before.[1] But now he gave himself greater freedom, having been proved in the school of temptation; and the manifold struggles he had gone through had given him a more cheerful countenance. The wrongs that had been done him had endued him with a more confident temper, and, with higher spirit than before, he went about freely everywhere. Meantime his father came back, and, not finding his son, heaped sin on sin and turned round to upbraid his wife. Then, raging and blustering, he ran to the place where his son was, so that, if he could not call him

[1] See above, I., 10 (at the end).

back, he might at least drive him out of the province. But (for that the fear of the Lord is confidence of strength) when the son of Grace heard his carnal father coming to him, he went of his own accord to meet him fearless and joyful, crying with free speech that he cared nothing for his father's chains and stripes. He averred moreover that he would gladly undergo any evils for the name of Christ.

14. But when his father saw that he would not be able to recall Francis from the journey he had begun he was roused by all means to get back the money. The man of God had desired to offer it all to be spent on feeding the poor and on the repair of that church. But he, who loved not money, was not to be misled by any show of good that it might bring, and he who was not held back by any affection for it was in nowise disturbed at the loss of it. Therefore when the money was found which that greatest despiser of earthly things and that most eager searcher after heavenly riches had thrown aside into the dust of the window, the raging father's fury was somewhat appeased, and the thirst of his avarice in some sort allayed by the dew of discovery. Then he brought his son before the bishop of the city, so that by a formal renunciation of all his property in the bishop's presence he might give up all he had. And Francis not only did not refuse to do this, but, greatly rejoicing, made haste with ready mind to perform what had been demanded of him.

15. When brought before the bishop, Francis would brook no delay nor hesitation in anything: nay, without waiting to be spoken to and without speaking he

immediately put off and cast aside all his garments and gave them back to his father. Moreover he did not even keep his drawers but stripped himself stark naked before all the bystanders. But the bishop, observing his disposition, and greatly wondering at his fervour and stedfastness, arose forthwith, gathered him into his arms and covered him with the mantle which he himself was wearing. He understood clearly that "the counsel was of God," and perceived that the actions of the man of God which he had witnessed enfolded a mystery. Immediately therefore the bishop became his helper, and, cherishing and encouraging him, he embraced him in the bowels of charity.

Behold even now he wrestles naked with his naked foe, and having cast off all that is of the world, is mindful of God's righteousness alone! Even now for that righteousness' sake laying aside all anxiety he strives so to set at naught his own life that as a poor man he may find peace in his harassed way, and that meanwhile the wall of the flesh alone may separate him from the vision of God.

CHAPTER VII

How he was taken by robbers and thrown into the snow; and how he served the lepers

16. HE who formerly wore scarlet array was now going clad in scanty garments, and as he was singing praises to the Lord in French in a certain wood, some robbers suddenly rushed upon him. On their asking him in no friendly tone who he was, the

man of God answered confidently with a loud voice: "I am a herald of the great King. What is that to you?" But they beat him and cast him into a pit filled with deep snow, saying, "Lie there, thou clownish herald of God!" But he turned himself this way and that to shake off the snow, and when they went away he jumped out of the pit, and exhilarated by great joy began with loud voice through the grove to utter praises to the Creator of all things. At length he reached a cloister of monks where he spent several days as a scullion, wearing nothing but a wretched shirt, and desiring to be filled at least with broth. But when, meeting with no pity there, he could not even get any old clothing, he left the place (not moved by anger but urged by need) and came to the city of Gubbio where he got him a small tunic from a former friend of his.

But some time afterwards when the fame of the man of God was spreading everywhere and his name was noised abroad among the people, the Prior of the aforesaid monastery remembered and realised how the man of God had been treated and came to him and for reverence of the Saviour humbly begged forgiveness for himself and his monks.

17. And then the holy lover of all humility betook him to the lepers, and was with them, serving them all most zealously for God's sake, washing all foulness from them and even wiping away the matter from the ulcers; even as he says himself in his Testament, "For when I was in sin it seemed to me exceeding bitter to look on lepers, but the Lord brought me among them, and I showed mercy unto them". For indeed at one

time the sight of lepers was (as he used to say) so bitter to him that when in the days of his vanity he looked at their houses about two miles off, he stopped his nostrils with his hands.

But when now by the grace and power of the Highest he was beginning to think of holy and profitable things, one day, while still in the habit of the world, he met a leper, and, having become stronger than himself, went near and kissed him.

Thereafter also he began to despise himself more and more, until by the Redeemer's mercy he attained to perfect conquest of himself. While remaining in the world and still following the world he was a helper of other poor also, stretching forth the hand of mercy to the destitute and pitying the afflicted. For one day when (contrary to his wont, for he was most courteous), he had upbraided a poor man who asked alms of him, forthwith, led by penitence he began to say to himself that it was a great reproach and shame to deny the request of one asking in the name of so great a King. And then he settled it in his heart that he would, according to his power, never in future deny anything to any one asking him for the sake of God. Which thing he most diligently performed and fulfilled, until he gave himself wholly, and in every way [to others], having become a practiser before he became a teacher of that counsel of the Gospel: "Give to him that asketh of thee (it says) and from him that would borrow of thee turn not away".

CHAPTER VIII

How he built S. Damian's church: and concerning the conversation of the Ladies who abode in that same place

18. NOW the first work which blessed Francis undertook after having been delivered from the hand of his carnal father was to build a house for God: but he did not try to build it anew, rather did he repair the old and restore the ancient; he pulled not up the foundation, but built upon it, ever (though unwittingly) respecting Christ's prerogative, for "other foundation can no one lay than that which hath been laid, which is Christ Jesus". And when he had returned to the place where (as has been said) a church of S. Damian had been built of yore, he zealously repaired it in a short time, the grace of the Most High being with him. This is that blessed and holy place wherein the glorious Religion and most excellent Order of Poor Ladies and holy virgins took its happy beginning some six years after blessed Francis' conversion, by the means of this same blessed man: whereof the Lady Clara, a native of the city of Assisi, a stone precious and strong above all the others of the pile, was the foundation. For when, after the beginning of the Order of the Brethren, the said lady had been turned to God by the admonitions of the holy man, she lived for the advantage of many, and for a pattern to a countless multitude. She was noble by family, but nobler by Grace; a virgin in her flesh, most chaste in her mind; youthful in age, but hoary in spirit; stedfast in purpose and most ardent in longing after the

Divine love; endued with wisdom and eminent in humility; bright (*clara*) in name; brighter in life; brightest in character. (19) And over her arose a noble fabric of most precious pearls, "whose praise is not of men but of God," since neither our narrow thought avails to imagine it, nor our scanty speech to utter it. For chiefly and above all things flourishes in them the virtue of mutual and continual charity which so binds their wills into one that though in any place forty or fifty of them be dwelling together, identity in willing and not willing makes in them one spirit out of many. Secondly, there glows in each one the jewel of humility which so preserves the good gifts bestowed on them from Heaven that they are worthy of the other virtues also. Thirdly, they are all so sprinkled with the wondrous perfume of the lily of virginity and chastity that, forgetful of earthly thoughts, they long to meditate on heavenly things alone; and from that lily's fragrance such love of the eternal Bridegroom arises in their hearts, that the entireness of holy affection shuts out from them every habit of their former life. Fourthly, they have all been so distinguished by the title of the deepest poverty that scarcely or never at all do they allow themselves to satisfy the utmost need of food and clothing. (20) Fifthly, they have attained such singular grace of abstinence and taciturnity that it is no effort to them to check the motion of the flesh and to restrain their tongues; so that some of them are become so disused to talk that when necessity requires that they should speak, they scarce remember how to form the words as they ought. Sixthly, among all

these qualities, they are so wondrously adorned with the virtue of patience that no adversity or tribulation, no vexation or injury breaks or changes their spirit. And seventhly, they have been found worthy to reach such a height of contemplation as to learn therein all they ought to do and avoid; and it is their happy mental experience to be rapt in God, persevering night and day in prayer and praise to Him. May the eternal God of His holy grace deign to bring so holy a beginning to a still holier end! And let this suffice for the present concerning the virgins dedicated to God and the most devout handmaids of Christ, since their wondrous life and glorious institution, which they received from the Lord Pope Gregory (at that time Bishop of Ostia) demands a work to itself, and leisure to write it.

CHAPTER IX

How, having changed his habit, he rebuilt the church of S. Maria in Portiuncula; and how, on hearing the Gospel, he forsook all things, and invented and made the habit which the brethren wear

21. MEANTIME the Saint of God, having changed his habit, and repaired the aforesaid church, removed to another place hard by the city of Assisi, and here he began to rebuild a certain church that was dilapidated and well-nigh destroyed, nor did he leave off what he had well begun until he had brought it all to completion. Then he betook him to another place which is called Portiuncula where in ancient days a church of the Blessed Virgin the Mother of God had been built, but now it was forsaken, and cared for by none. And when the Saint

of God saw that it was thus brought to ruin, being moved with pity, for that he glowed with devotion to the Mother of all goodness, he began to dwell there [and was] diligent [in repairing it]. Now it was in the third year from his conversion when he had finished repairing the said church; and at that time he went about wearing a kind of hermit's dress, girded with a leather girdle, carrying a staff in his hand and having shoes on his feet.

22. But when one day the Gospel, how Christ sent forth His disciples to preach, was read in that same church the Saint of God who was present and had got some inkling of the Gospel words, after the solemnities of Mass had been celebrated, humbly begged the priest to explain the Gospel to him. And when the priest had set forth to him all things in order, S. Francis hearing that Christ's disciples ought not to possess gold, silver, or money, not to carry on their way scrip, wallet, bread or staff, not to have shoes, or two tunics, but to preach the Kingdom of God, and repentance, straightway he cried, exulting in the spirit of God: "This is what I wish, this is what I am seeking, this I long with all my inmost heart to do". Forthwith the holy Father, overflowing with joy, hastens to fulfil that saving word, nor suffers he any delay to pass before he begins devoutly to perform what he has heard. Straightway he puts his shoes off from his feet, and the staff out of his hands, and, content with one tunic, exchanges his leathern girdle for a small cord. Thenceforth he prepares him a tunic displaying the image of the Cross, that therein he may beat off all promptings of the devil; he makes it of

the roughest stuff that therein he may crucify the flesh with [its] vices and sins; lastly he makes it most poor and mean, and such as by no means to excite the world's covetousness. But the other things he had heard, he yearned with the utmost diligence and reverence to perform: for he had been no deaf hearer of the Gospel, but, committing all he had heard to praiseworthy memory, he gave heed diligently to fulfil it to the letter.

CHAPTER X

Of his preaching of the Gospel and proclamation of peace; and of the conversion of the first six brethren

23. THEN with great fervour of spirit and joy of mind he began to preach repentance to all, with simple words but largeness of heart edifying his hearers. For his word was like a blazing fire piercing through the inmost heart, and it filled the minds of all with wonder. He seemed quite another man than he had been, and, gazing on heaven he disdained to look on earth. And this was surely a wonder; for he first began to preach in the place where when still a child he had learnt to read, and where moreover he was buried with honour the first time;[1] in order that the happy beginning might be commended by a still happier consummation. Where he learnt there also he taught, and where he began there he made a happy end. Whensoever he preached, before setting forth God's word to the congregation he besought peace, saying, "The Lord give you peace". Peace did he ever most devoutly

[1] See above p. vii. (Introduction).

proclaim to men and women, to those he met and those he overtook. Wherefore many who had been haters alike of peace and of salvation, embraced peace with their whole heart, the Lord working with them, and themselves became children of peace and zealots of eternal salvation. (24) Among these, a man of Assisi of pious and simple spirit was the first devoted follower of the man of God. After him brother Bernard,[1] accepting the embassage of peace, ran eagerly after the Saint of God to purchase the Kingdom of Heaven. For he had often given hospitality to the blessed father; and, having seen and known his life and behaviour, and been refreshed by the fragrance of his sanctity, he conceived fear and brought forth the spirit of salvation. He used to see him praying all night, most rarely sleeping, praising God and the glorious Virgin, His Mother. He wondered, and said, "Truly this man is from God". He hastened therefore to sell all he had, and gave not to his kindred, but to the poor: and, making good his title to the way of perfection, he fulfilled the counsel of the Holy Gospel, which says, "If thou will be perfect, go and sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come, follow Me". Which done, he became S. Francis' associate in life and habit, and was always with him, until, after the brethren were multiplied, he was sent, by the tender father's order, to other regions: for *his* conversion to God was the pattern for other converts in respect of the selling of their possessions and giving to the poor.

[1] *Cf.* below, II., 109.

25. Now S. Francis rejoiced with exceeding great joy over the coming and conversion of such a man, for that the Lord seemed to be caring for him by giving him a needful companion and faithful friend. And straightway another man of Assisi followed him—one right praiseworthy in conversation, who after a little while completed yet more holily that which he had holily begun. And after no long time he was followed by brother Giles, a simple, upright and God-fearing man who by his long continuance in holiness and his righteous and pious life has left us examples of perfect obedience, of manual toil also, of solitary life, and of holy contemplation. The number of seven was completed by the addition to these of one more, brother Philip, whose lips the Lord touched with the pebble of purity[1] that he might speak sweet things of Him and utter things mellifluous: yea, understanding and interpreting the Holy Scriptures, though he had never learned, he became an imitator of those whom the chiefs of the Jews alleged to be ignorant and unlettered.

CHAPTER XI

Of S. Francis' spirit of prophecy and his admonitions

26. NOW the blessed father Francis was being filled day by day with the comfort and grace of the Holy Ghost; and with all watchfulness and care was fashioning his new sons by a new education, teaching them to tread with undeviating steps the way of holy poverty and blessed simplicity. And one day when

[1] See Isaiah vi. 6 (Vulgate and R.V. margin).

he was marvelling at the Lord's mercy in regard to the benefits He had bestowed upon him, and was longing that the future course of his own and his disciples' life might be shown him by the Lord, he sought the place of prayer, as he was wont very often to do, and as he continued there for a long time, waiting upon the Ruler of the whole world with fear and trembling, thinking in the bitterness of his soul of the years ill spent, and often repeating the words, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner," by degrees a certain unspeakable joy and surpassing sweetness began to overflow his inmost heart. He began also to stand aloof from himself; the feelings were checked and the darkness dispersed which through fear of sin had gathered in his heart; there was poured into him assurance of the forgiveness of all offences, and confidence of restoration to grace was vouchsafed to him. Then he was caught up above himself, and wholly absorbed in a certain light; the capacity of his mind was enlarged, and he beheld clearly what was to come to pass. Finally, as that sweetness faded away with the light, having been renewed in spirit, he already seemed changed into another man.

27. And so he came back and said to the brethren rejoicing: "Take courage, beloved, and rejoice in the Lord, and be not sad because ye seem few. Nor let my simplicity nor your own dismay you, forasmuch as, even as the Lord has shown me in truth, God shall make us grow into a great multitude, and shall give us manifold enlargement, even unto the ends of the world. I am constrained also for your profit to tell you what I have seen; but far more gladly would I keep silence

concerning it, did not charity constrain me to report it to you. I have seen a great multitude of men coming to us, and desiring to live with us in the habit of holy life and under the rule of blessed Religion. And lo! there is still in mine ears the sound of them as they go and return at the bidding of holy obedience. I have seen as it were the ways filled with the multitude of them assembling in these parts out of almost every nation. Frenchmen are coming, Spaniards hastening, Germans and English running, and a mighty multitude of diverse others tongues are speeding." When the brethren had heard this they were filled with saving joy, both by reason of the grace the Lord God had bestowed on His Saint, and because they were ardently thirsting for the profit of their neighbours, desiring that they might daily increase therein to the end they might be saved.

28. And the Saint said to them: "Brethren, in order that we may give thanks faithfully and devoutly to the Lord our God for all His gifts, and that ye may know what manner of life that of the present and of future brethren is to be, understand the truth concerning what shall come to pass. Now, at the beginning of our life, we shall find fruits exceeding sweet and pleasant to eat; but after a while fruits less sweet and pleasant shall be offered us; and at last, some that are full of bitterness shall be given, which we shall not be able to eat, for they shall be uneatable by all men by reason of their bitterness, though they may show some outward fragrance and beauty. And verily, as I have told you, the Lord shall increase us into a great people; but at last it shall happen even

as if a man should cast his nets into the sea, or into some lake, and should enclose a plenteous multitude of fish, and, when he has put them all into his boat, should, disliking to carry them all because of their multitude, choose out the larger and those that best please him to put into his vessels, and throw the rest away!

The conspicuous truth and the manifest fulfilment of all these things which the Saint of God foretold are plain enough to all who consider them in the spirit of truth. Behold how the spirit of prophecy rested on S. Francis!

CHAPTER XII

How he sent them two by two through the world and how in a short time they came together again

29. AT the same time also the entrance of another good man into the Religion raised their number to eight. Then blessed Francis called them all together to him, and after saying many things to them concerning the Kingdom of God, the despising of the world, the renouncing their own will and the subjection of their own bodies, he divided them by twos into four parts and said to them: "Go, dearest brethren, two and two through different parts of the world, announcing to men peace, and repentance for remission of sins; and be patient in tribulation, sure that the Lord will fulfil His purpose and promise. To those who question you answer humbly, bless them that persecute you, give thanks to them that revile

and slander you, because for these things an eternal kingdom is preparing for us." And they accepting the injunction of holy obedience with joy and great gladness, fell down humbly on the ground before S. Francis. But he embraced them affectionately and earnestly and said to each one, "Cast thy thought on the Lord and He will nourish thee". These words he used to say whenever he sent any brethren away on an "obedience".[1]

30. Then brother Bernard took his journey with brother Giles toward S. James;[2] S. Francis with one companion chose another part of the world; and the four others, going two and two, kept the remaining parts. But after a short while S. Francis, desiring to see them all again, prayed to the Lord, who gathereth together the dispersed of Israel, that of His mercy He would deign to gather them together shortly. And so it came to pass that in a little while, according to his desire, and without human call they came together, giving thanks to God. And as they met together they rejoiced greatly at seeing their tender shepherd; and wondered that they had thus assembled by one [common] desire. Then they related the good things the merciful Lord had done to them, and, if they had been in any degree negligent and ungrateful, they humbly begged and attentively received from their holy father correction and discipline. For such had ever been their custom when they came to him, nor did they hide from him the smallest thought, or even the first impulses of the heart; and, when they had ful-

[1] *Cf.* below, II., 120, 152.

[2] *I.e.*, the sanctuary of S. James at Compostella.

filled all which had been commanded them they deemed themselves unprofitable servants. For so did the spirit of purity pervade all that first school of S. Francis, that though they might know they were doing useful, holy, and righteous actions, vain rejoicing thereat was quite out of their ken.

31. But the blessed father, embracing his sons with exceeding love, began to open to them his purpose, and to point out what the Lord had revealed to him. And straightway four other men, good and meet, were added to them and followed the Saint of God. A great rumour therefore arose among the people, and the fame of the man of God began to spread farther. And surely at that time S. Francis and his brethren did singularly exult and exceedingly rejoice when any faithful man among the Christian people, whosoever or of what quality soever he might be, rich, poor, noble, low-born, despised, valued, wise, simple, clerk, unlettered, or layman came, led by the Spirit of God, to receive the habit of holy Religion. Men of the world also wondered greatly at all these things, and the example of humility provoked them to amend their way of life and repent of their sins. Neither low birth nor the drawback of poverty was any obstacle to his building up in the work of God those that it was the will of God to build up Who delights to be with the simple, and the outcasts of the world.

CHAPTER XIII

How, having eleven brethren, he first wrote down the Rule; and how the Lord Pope Innocent confirmed it: and concerning the vision of the tree

32. BLESSED FRANCIS, seeing that the Lord God was daily increasing the number [of the brethren] for that very purpose,[1] wrote down simply and in few words for himself and for his brethren both present and future a pattern and rule of life, using chiefly the language of the holy Gospel, after whose perfection alone he yearned. However he inserted a few other things necessarily concerned with the practice of a holy conversation. So he came to Rome with all the said brethren, longing exceedingly that what he had written might be confirmed by the Lord Pope Innocent III. There was at Rome at that time the venerable bishop of Assisi, named Guido, who honoured S. Francis and all the brethren in all things, and revered them with special affection. When he saw S. Francis and his brethren, he was annoyed at their coming, not knowing the cause of it: for he feared that they would leave their native country wherein the Lord had already begun to do great things by His servants; he was most glad to have such men in his diocese, and was building great expectations on their life and conduct. But when he heard the cause of their coming and understood their purpose, he rejoiced greatly in the Lord, pledging himself to give them advice and afford them help in the business. S. Francis also waited upon

[1] *I.e.*, for the salvation of men. See preceding paragraph.

the reverend Lord Bishop of Sabina (named John of S. Paul), who among the princes and great ones of the Roman Court seemed to be a despiser of earthly and a lover of heavenly things. This man received him with kindness and charity and warmly commended his will and purpose. (33) But, being a farseeing and judicious man, he began to question S. Francis on many points, and urged him to embrace the life of a monk or of a hermit. S. Francis, however, as humbly as he could, refused to yield to the Cardinal's persuasion; not that he despised what had been urged upon him; but in his pious longing for another course of life he was carried on by a still loftier desire. The Cardinal wondered at his fervour, and fearing lest he might flinch from so stern a purpose, pointed him out easier ways. At length, overcome by the stedfastness of S. Francis' entreaties, he gave in, and strove thenceforth to further his business with the Pope. At that time the Lord Pope Innocent III. ruled over the Church, a glorious man, one moreover of abundant learning, renowned in discourse, fervent in zeal for righteousness in those things which the business of promoting the Christian faith demanded. When he knew the wish of the men of God, after first examining the matter, he granted their request and carried it into complete effect: and then, encouraging and admonishing them concerning many things, he blessed S. Francis and his brethren, and said to them: "Go, and the Lord be with you, brethren, and as He shall deign to inspire you, preach repentance to all. And when the Lord Almighty shall multiply you in number and in grace, ye shall report it to me with joy, and I will grant you more

than this and shall with more confidence entrust greater things to you."

Verily the Lord was with blessed Francis whithersoever he went, cheering him with revelations, and encouraging him with benefits. For one night when he was gone to sleep he seemed to be walking along a road by the side of which stood a very lofty tree. That tree was fair and strong, exceeding thick and high. And it came to pass that as he came near to it, and stood beneath it, wondering at its beauty and height, he himself grew to such a height that he touched the top of the tree, and taking it in his hand, very easily bowed it to the ground. And so indeed it was done; since the Lord Innocent, the highest and loftiest tree in the world bowed himself so graciously to his will and petition.

CHAPTER XIV

Of his return from Rome to the valley of Spoleto, and of his sojourn on the way

34. S. FRANCIS with his brethren greatly exulting in the gift and favour of so great a father and lord gave thanks to Almighty God who setteth the humble on high and cheereth the sorrowful with deliverance. And he went straightway to visit the threshold of S. Peter; and, having finished his prayer, left the city and set out with his companions on the journey toward the valley of Spoleto. And as they thus went along they talked together of what great gifts the most merciful God had given

them; of their gracious reception by the Vicar of Christ, the Lord and father of all Christendom; of their power to fulfil his admonitions and commands; of how they might sincerely observe and unfailingly guard the Rule they had received; of how they should walk in all holiness and religion before the Most High; and finally of how their life and behaviour might by increase of the holy virtues be an example to their neighbours. And when Christ's new disciples had held sufficient disputation on such matters in the school of Humility, the day was far spent and the hour was past. Then, hungry and tired out with their journey, they came to a lonely spot, where they could find no refreshment because it was very far from the dwellings of men. And straightway, God's grace providing for them, a man met them bringing bread in his hand, which he gave them, and went away. But they wondered in their hearts, for they knew him not, and devoutly admonished one another to have greater trust in God's mercy. They took food, and, not a little refreshed thereby, came to a place near the city of Orte where they stayed about fifteen days. Some of them would go into the city to get necessary victuals, and carry back to the other brethren what little they had been able to gather from door to door, and they all ate it together, with thanksgiving and with joyful hearts. If anything were left over (since they could not give it to any one) they hid it in a tomb where bodies of the dead had been laid in days gone by, so that they might eat of it again.

35. That place was deserted and forsaken and few

people or none frequented it. Great was their exultation at seeing and having nothing which might give them vain or carnal delight. Wherefore in that place they began to have intercourse with holy Poverty, and, comforted above measure by the lack of all things that are of the world, they determined to cleave to her for ever everywhere, even as they were doing there. And because, having laid aside all care for earthly things, God's comfort alone was their delight, they decreed and established that whatsoever tribulations might shake them, and whatsoever temptations might urge them they would never shrink from her embraces. But though the pleasantness of the place (which has no small power to weaken true strength of mind) did not hold back their affections, yet, lest a longer stay might entangle them even in the semblance of ownership, they withdrew thence, and, following their happy father, came at that time into the valley of Spoleto. They discussed together, those true followers of righteousness, whether they ought to live among men, or betake them to solitary places. But S. Francis, who trusted not in his own skill, but prefaced every business with holy prayer, chose not to live for himself alone, but for Him who died for all, knowing himself to have been sent for this, that he might gain for God souls that the devil was trying to take away.

CHAPTER XV

Of the fame of S. Francis, and of the conversion of many to God. How the Order was called that of the Lesser Brethren (Friars Minor); and how blessed Francis fashioned those entering the Religion

36. FRANCIS, therefore, Christ's valiant knight, went round the cities and fortresses proclaiming the Kingdom of God, preaching peace, teaching salvation and repentance for the remission of sins, not with plausible words of human wisdom, but with the learning and power of the Spirit. The Apostolic authority which had been granted him enabled him to act in all things with greater confidence, without using flattery or seducing blandishments. Incapable of caressing the faults of certain men, he could pierce them; incapable of showing favour to the lives of sinners, he could smite them with sharp reproof because he had first persuaded himself by practice of that which he endeavoured to commend to others by his words; and without fear of any reprover he uttered the truth most confidently, so that even the most learned men, mighty in renown and dignity, wondered at his discourses and were smitten by his presence with wholesome fear. Men ran, women too ran, clerks hastened, and Religious made speed to see and hear the Saint of God who seemed to all to be a man of another world. People of every age and either sex hastened to behold the wonders which the Lord was newly working in the world by His servant. Surely at that time, whether by holy Francis' presence or by the fame [of him], it seemed that, as it were, a new light had been sent from

heaven on earth, scattering the universal blackness of darkness which had so seized on well-nigh the whole of that region, that scarce any one knew whither he must go. For such depth of forgetfulness of God and such slumber of neglect of His commandments had oppressed almost all that they could scarce endure to be roused, even slightly, from their old and inveterate sins.

37. He darted his beams like a star shining in the gloom of night, and as it were the morning spread over the darkness; and thus it came to pass that in a short time the face of the whole province was changed, and she appeared of more cheerful countenance, the former foulness having everywhere been laid aside. The former dryness was done away and in the field erstwhile hard the crops sprang up quickly; the untended vine began moreover to put forth shoots of divine fragrance, and, after bearing blossoms of sweetness, yielded fruits of honour and virtue together. Everywhere thanksgiving and the voice of praise were resounding in such wise that many cast away the cares of the world, and in the life and teaching of the most blessed father Francis gained knowledge of themselves, and aspired to love of their Creator and reverence for Him. Many among the people, nobles and plebeians, clerks and lay-folk, pierced by God's inspiration, began to come to holy Francis, longing evermore to fight under his discipline and leadership: all of whom the Saint of God like a plenteous stream of heavenly grace watered with anointing showers, and beautified the field of their hearts with flowers of virtue. Truly an excellent craftsman; after whose pattern, rule and teaching, heralded with noteworthy proclamation, Christ's Church is being renewed

in either sex, and is triumphing in a threefold army of men who are to be saved. For he assigned to all their rule of life, and pointed out truly the way to be saved in every station.

38. But the chief matter of our discourse is the Order which as well from charity as by profession he took upon him and maintained. What then shall we say of it? He himself first planted the Order of Friars Minor (Lesser Brethren) and on that very occasion gave it that name; since (as is well known) it was written in the Rule: "And be they lesser": and in that hour, when those words were uttered, he said: "I will that this brotherhood be called the Order of Lesser Brethren" (Friars Minor).[1] And truly they were "lesser," for, being subject to all, they ever sought for lowly dwellings, and for occupations in the discharge of which they might appear in some sort to suffer wrong, that they might deserve to be so founded on the solid basis of true humility that in happy disposition the spiritual building of all the virtues might arise in them. Verily on the foundation of stedfastness a noble structure of charity arose, wherein living stones heaped together from all parts of the world were built up into an habitation of the Holy Spirit. Oh, with what ardour of charity did Christ's new disciples burn! What love of their pious fellowship flourished among them! For whenever they came together in any place, or met one another in the way, (as is usual) there sprang up a shoot of spiritual love scattering over all love the seeds of true affection. What can I say more? Their embraces

[1] See *Speculum Perfectionis*, 26.

were chaste, their feelings gentle, their kisses holy,[1] their intercourse sweet, their laughter modest, their look cheerful, their eye single, their spirit submissive, their tongue peaceable, their answer soft, their purpose identical, their obedience ready, their hand untiring. (39) And for that they despised all earthly things, and never loved one another with private love, but poured forth their whole affection in common, the business of all alike was to give up themselves as the price of supplying their brethren's need. They came together with longing, they dwelt together with delight; but the parting of companions was grievous on both sides, a bitter divorce, a cruel separation. But these obedient knights durst put nothing before the orders of holy Obedience, and before the word of command was finished they were preparing to fulfil the order; not knowing how to distinguish between precept and precept, they ran, as it were, headlong to perform whatever was enjoined, all contradiction being put aside.

The followers of most holy Poverty, having nothing, loved nothing, and therefore had no fear of losing anything. They were content with a tunic only, patched sometimes within and without; no elegance was seen in it, but great abjectness and vileness, to the end they might wholly appear therein as crucified to the world. They were girt with a cord, and wore drawers of common stuff; and they were piously purposed to remain in that state, and to have nothing more. Everywhere, therefore, they were secure, nor kept in suspense by any fear; distracted by no care,

[1] See below, II., 155.

they awaited the morrow without solicitude, nor, though oftentimes in great straits in their journeyings, were they ever in anxiety about a night's lodging. For when, as often happened, they lacked a lodging in the coldest weather, an oven sheltered them, or, at least, they lay hid by night humbly in underground places or in caves. And by day those who knew how to, worked with their hands, and they stayed in lepers' houses, or in other decent places, serving all with humility and devotion.

40. They would exercise no calling whence scandal might arise, but, by always doing holy, just, virtuous, and useful deeds, they provoked all with whom they lived to copy their humility and patience. The virtue of patience had so compassed them about that they rather sought to be where they might suffer persecution of their bodies than where they might be uplifted by the world's favour, if their holiness was acknowledged or praised. For many times when they were reviled, insulted, stripped naked, scourged, bound or imprisoned, they would not avail themselves of any one's protection, but bore all so bravely that the voice of praise and thanksgiving alone sounded in their mouth. Scarcely, or not at all, did they cease from praising God and from prayer; but, recalling by constant examination what they had done, they rendered thanks to God for what they had done well, and groans and tears for what they had neglected or unadvisedly committed. They deemed themselves forsaken by God unless they knew themselves to be constantly visited in their devotions by their wonted piety. And so when they would apply themselves to prayer they sought the

support of certain appliances lest their prayer should be disturbed by sleep stealing over them. Some were held up by hanging ropes, some surrounded themselves with instruments of iron, while others shut themselves up in wooden cages. If ever their sobriety were disturbed (as commonly happens) by abundance of food or drink, or if, tired by a journey, they overpassed, though but a little, the bounds of necessity, they tortured themselves most severely by many days' abstinence. In short they made it their business to keep down the promptings of the flesh with such maceration that they shrank not from often stripping themselves naked in the sharpest frost, and piercing their whole body with thorns so as to draw blood. (41) And so vigorously did they set at naught all earthly things that they scarce submitted to take the barest necessaries of life, and shrank not from any hardships, having been parted from bodily comfort by such long usage. Amid all this they followed peace and gentleness with all men, and, ever behaving themselves modestly and peaceably, were most zealous in avoiding all occasions of scandal. For they scarcely spoke even in time of need, nor did any jesting or idle words proceed out of their mouth, in order that nothing immodest or unseemly might by any means be found in all their behaviour and conversation. Their every act was disciplined, their every movement modest, all the senses had been so mortified in them that they scarce submitted to hear or see anything but what their purpose demanded; their eyes were fixed on the ground, their mind clave to Heaven. No envy, malice, rancour, evil-speaking, suspicion or bitterness had place in

them, but great concord, continual quietness, thanksgiving, and the voice of praise were in them. Such were the teachings wherewith the tender father, not by word and tongue only, but above all in deed and truth, was fashioning his new sons.

CHAPTER XVI

Of his sojourn at Rivo Torto and of his guarding of Poverty

42. THE blessed Francis with the other brethren repaired to a place called Rivo Torto by the city of Assisi. Here there was a forsaken hovel beneath whose shelter those most strenuous despisers of large and beautiful houses abode, and protected themselves from storms of rain. For, as saith the Saint, one ascends to Heaven quicker from a hovel than from a palace. In that same place there dwelt with the blessed father all his sons and brethren in much toil and in lack of all things; very often, wholly deprived of the solace of bread, they were content with turnips only, which in their distress they begged for here and there over the plain of Assisi. Their dwelling was so extremely cramped that they could scarce sit down or rest in it. There was not a sound of murmuring or complaining at these things; but their heart being at peace their mind was filled with joy and kept them patient. S. Francis most carefully examined himself and his companions daily, nay continually; he suffered not that aught of wantonness should linger in them, and drove away all negligence from their hearts. Rigid in discipline he guarded himself watchfully at every

hour; for if ever (as is usual) any fleshly temptation assailed him he would plunge in winter into a pit full of ice and remain there until all fleshly taint withdrew from him. And the others most eagerly followed the example of such mortification. (43) He taught them not only to mortify vices and to keep down the promptings of the flesh but also to control even the outward organs of sense whereby death enters the soul. For when at that time[1] the Emperor Otho [IV.] was passing through those quarters with great stir and pomp to receive the crown of the earthly Empire, the most holy father and his companions in the said hovel were close to the road by which the Emperor was passing; but he did not go out to look, nor did he allow any to do so, save one who was most stedfastly to announce to the Emperor that this glory of his would endure but for a short time. For the glorious Saint was dwelling in himself, and, walking in the amplitude of his heart, was preparing in himself an habitation meet for God; wherefore no outward clamour caught his ears, nor could any sound disturb or interrupt the vast business he had in hand. The Apostolic authority was strong in him,[2] and therefore he utterly refused to flatter kings and princes. He ever applied himself to holy simplicity nor did he allow the straitness of his abode to cramp the breadth of his heart.

44. He wrote the names of the brethren on the beams of the dwelling so that each if he wished to rest or pray might recognise his own place, and so that the painful smallness of the space might not cause the silence of the mind to be troubled. Now one day

[1] A.D. 1209. [2] *Cf.* above, I., 36.

while they were staying there a man leading an ass chanced to come to the shelter where the man of God was dwelling with his companions, and in order not to be driven away, he urged his ass to go in, saying these words: "Go in, for we shall do good to this place". When S. Francis heard these words and perceived what the man meant, he was moved in spirit; for the man thought that the brethren intended to stay there [as owners] in order to enlarge the place, and "add house to house". And S. Francis went out forthwith, and forsook that hovel, because of what the countryman had said, and he removed to another place not far from it called Portiuncula, where, as was said above, the Church of S. Mary was that he had repaired long before. He would have nothing in the way of property that he might the more fully possess all things in the Lord.

CHAPTER XVII

How the blessed Francis taught the brethren to pray; and concerning the obedience and purity of the brethren

45. AT that time the brethren entreated S. Francis to teach them to pray, because, walking in simplicity of spirit, they knew not as yet the offices of the Church. And he said to them: "When ye pray, say, 'Our Father' and 'We worship Thee, O Christ, [here][1] and at all Thy churches which are in all the world, and we bless Thee for that by Thy holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world'". And this the brethren, dutiful disciples of their master, were most

[1] Supplied from the Testamentum S. Francisci (Opuscula S. Francisci, p. 78, ed. Quaracchi).

careful to observe, for not only those things which blessed Francis told them by way of brotherly advice or fatherly command, but even those things which he was thinking of or meditating on, if they could get to know them by any token, they strove most effectually to fulfil. For their blessed father used to tell them that true obedience is not only uttered, but thought out; not only enjoined, but desired. That is, if a subject brother should not only hear the voice of a superior brother but should understand his will, he ought forthwith to concentrate himself wholly on obedience and do what he understands by any sign to be the superior's will.

Moreover, in whatsoever place a church might be built, even if they were not present there, yet if they could in anywise see it from afar they bowed down toward it flat on the ground, and inclining the inward and the outward man, worshipped the Almighty, saying, "We worship Thee, O Christ, [here] and at all Thy churches"; as the holy father had taught them. And (a thing not less to be wondered at) wherever they beheld a cross, or a mark of a cross, whether on the ground, on a wall, on trees, or in hedges by the way, they did that same thing. (46) For holy simplicity had so filled them, innocency of life was so teaching them, purity of heart so possessed them that they were utterly ignorant of duplicity of mind. For as they were one in faith so they were one in spirit, one in will, one in charity: agreement in disposition, harmonious behaviour, the practice of the virtues, conformity of mind and piety in action ever prevailed among them.

For once when they were often confessing their sins to a secular priest who was deservedly infamous and a man to be scorned by all for his flagitious deeds, though his wickedness had been made known to them by many they would by no means believe it, nor did they on that account omit to confess their sins to him as usual, or to pay him due reverence. And when one day he (or another priest) had said to one of the brethren, "See, brother, that thou be not a hypocrite," that brother immediately believed, by reason of the priest's words, that he was a hypocrite, and therefore day and night he lamented, being moved with exceeding grief. And when the brethren asked him what might be the meaning of such great sadness and such unwonted mourning, he answered: "A priest has said a thing to me which causes me such grief that I can hardly think of anything else". But the brethren tried to comfort him and urged him not to have such a belief. But he said, "What is it you say, brethren? It is a priest who said those words. Can a priest lie? Since then a priest lies not we must needs believe that what he has said is true." And so he continued a long time in such simplicity, but was calmed at length by the blessed father's words, who explained to him the priest's saying and wisely made excuse for the priest's intention. It was scarce possible for any brother to be in such trouble of mind that all the clouds would not depart and the sky be clear again at his bright words.

CHAPTER XVIII

Of the fiery chariot; and of blessed Francis' knowledge of things absent

47. AT that time the brethren, walking before God with simplicity and before men with confidence, were deemed worthy to be gladdened by a revelation from God. For whilst, kindled by the fire of the Holy Ghost, not only at the appointed hours but also at every hour (since earthly solicitude and troublesome anxious cares had little hold on them) they chanted "Our Father" in melody of the spirit with suppliant voice, one night the most blessed father Francis absented himself from them in body. And lo! about the hour of midnight, while some of the brethren were at rest and others were praying earnestly in silence, a fiery chariot of dazzling brightness came through the door of the house and turned about this way and that two or three times within the dwelling. Above it rested a huge globe, like the sun, which lit up the night. The watchers were dazed, the sleepers were startled: and they felt a clearness of heart not less than of body. They all came together, and began to ask one another what this might be: but by the power and grace of that great light the conscience of one was disclosed to another: and finally they understood and knew that it was the soul of their holy father which had shone with such dazzling radiance, and that for the grace of his special purity and the great tenderness of his care for his sons he had been found worthy to obtain from the Lord the blessing of so great a gift.

48. And indeed they had often had proof of this by manifest tokens and had found that the secrets of their hearts were not hidden from the most holy father. O how often, not by any man's teaching, but by revelation of the Holy Ghost did he know what absent brethren were doing, did he open the hidden things of their heart and explore their conscience! O how many did he admonish in dreams ordering them what they were to do and forbidding what they were to avoid! O of how many did he foretell evil whose present conduct was good in appearance! So also, forecasting that the wickednesses of many would end, he announced that the grace of salvation would come to them. Nay more, if any one for his spirit of purity and simplicity deserved to be distinguished, he enjoyed the singular consolation of beholding S. Francis in a way of which the rest had no experience. I will relate one instance, known to me by the report of faithful witnesses. Once when Brother John of Florence had been appointed by S. Francis Minister of the brethren in Provence and had been holding a chapter of the brethren in that same province, the Lord God of His wonted mercy opened to him the door of utterance and made all the brethren well disposed and attentive to hear. Among the brethren was a priest named Monaldo (renowned by report but yet more renowned in life) whose virtue was founded on humility, fostered by frequent prayer and preserved by the shield of patience. Brother Antony was also present at that chapter, whose mind the Lord opened, so that he might understand the Scriptures, and utter among all the people

words sweeter than honey and the honeycomb concerning Jesus. While he was most earnestly and devoutly preaching to the brethren on the text, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews," brother Monaldo looked toward the door of the house wherein the brethren were assembled, and there saw with his bodily eyes blessed Francis raised up in the air, with his hands stretched out as on a cross, blessing the brethren. All who were present seemed to be filled with the comfort of the Holy Ghost, and the saving joy which they experienced availed to render credible to them what they were told concerning the sight and presence of their most glorious father.

49. As to his knowledge of the secrets of other men's hearts, among many cases in which experience of this was had, let one be quoted concerning which no doubt can arise. A brother named Ricerio, noble by birth but nobler by conduct, a lover of God and a despiser of himself, was led, by the eager wish of a dutiful spirit, perfectly to attain and possess the favour of holy father Francis; but he greatly feared that in consequence of some hidden judgment S. Francis shrank from him and therefore made him a stranger to the favour of his love. That brother considered (being a God-fearing man) that if S. Francis loved any one with the deepest charity, such a one would also be worthy to deserve God's favour, but that, on the other hand, any one to whom S. Francis did not show himself well disposed and benign would fall under the wrath of the Judge on high. These thoughts the said brother kept turning over in his mind, of these things did he frequently hold silent converse with himself,

disclosing the secret of his cogitation to none. (50) But one day, when the blessed father was praying in his cell, and Ricerio was come to that place distressed by his wonted cogitation, the Saint of God both knowing of his arrival, and understanding his thoughts at once sent for him and said: "Let no temptation disturb thee, my son; let no cogitation afflict thee, for thou art most dear to me; and know that among those specially dear to me thou art worthy of my affection and intimacy. Come in to me confidently whenever thou wilt, and let my friendship give thee confidence to speak." Ricerio wondered with the utmost amazement, and thenceforward, having become more reverent, as he increased in the holy father's favour, so he began to have a larger trust in God's mercy.

O holy father how must those grieve for thy absence who have no hope at all ever to find thy like on earth! Help, we pray, by intercession those whom thou seest to be wrapped in the contagion of sin. Though thou wast already filled with the spirit of all the righteous, foreseeing the future, and knowing the present, thou didst ever bear the image of holy simplicity, that thou mightest fly from all boastfulness.

But let us resume the thread of our story and return to the foregoing matter.

CHAPTER XIX

Of S. Francis' watchful guarding of the brethren; of his self-contempt and true humility

51. THE most blessed man Francis came back in the body to his brethren, from whom (as has been said) he never withdrew himself in the spirit. He would search out the deeds of all with careful and diligent examination, being ever moved toward his subjects by a fruitful curiosity and leaving nothing unpunished where he found that anything wrong had been done. And his practice was first to decide concerning spiritual vices, next to give judgment on corporal vices, and lastly to root out all occasions which are wont to give entrance to sin.

With all zeal and with all carefulness did he guard holy Poverty, his Lady, and in order that he might never attain to superfluity he would not allow any vessel to be found in the house if without it he could by any means avoid being subject to the extremity of need. For he used to say that it was impossible to satisfy need without yielding obedience to pleasure. He hardly ever, or most rarely, allowed himself cooked food; and if he did, he would often mix it with ashes, or quench its flavour with cold water. O how often, when walking through the world to preach the Gospel, if invited to dinner by great Princes (who revered him with wondrous affection) would he taste a little meat (to observe the holy Gospel), and then, making a show of eating, put his hand to his mouth and drop the

remainder into his bosom, so that none might notice what he was doing!

What shall I say as to his drinking of wine, when he would not even allow himself to drink his fill of water when consumed by thirst? (52) Wherever he received hospitality he would allow no coverlet or clothes to be put over his resting-place; but the bare ground, his tunic only interposed, received his bare limbs; and when at times he refreshed his slight frame with the benefit of sleep, he would often sleep in a sitting posture, not otherwise reclining, and using a piece of wood or stone for a pillow. If appetite (as it is wont) had craved for some particular food, he could hardly be persuaded to eat it afterwards. It happened once that he was entering Assisi when he had somewhat recovered his strength after an illness during which he had eaten a little flesh of chicken; and on reaching the city gate he bade a brother who was with him tie a rope round his neck and drag him thus like a robber all through the city, shouting like a crier, and saying, "Come, look at the glutton who has been battening on poultry that he has been eating when you did not know it!" Many therefore flocked to see so strange a sight, and said as they wept together and heaved repeated sighs, "Woe to us wretches whose whole life is spent in bloodshed, who nourish our hearts and bodies in wantonness and drunkenness!" And so they were pricked in heart, and urged by so signal an example to a better way of life. (53) Many such-like things he often did in order both to attain perfect self-contempt and to invite others to attain perpetual honour. He was become unto himself as a rejected vessel: encumbered by no fear nor

anxiety for the body he most strenuously exposed it to affronts, that he might not be driven by love for it to covet any temporal thing. A true despiser of himself, he profitably instructed all by word and example to despise themselves.

For what did he do? While he was being magnified, and, with praiseworthy judgment, extolled by all, he alone counted himself the vilest of men, he alone most fervently despised himself. For oftentimes while all men were paying him honour he was wounded by exceeding grief, and, casting out the favour of men, he would, contrariwise, get some one to rebuke him. He would call one of the brethren to him and say, "On thy obedience I bid thee revile me harshly and tell me the truth in opposition to the lies of these men". And when that brother, though unwillingly, called him a boor, and a venal and unprofitable wretch, he would answer smiling and heartily applauding him, "The Lord bless thee, because thou art saying what is most true, for such things it is meet for the son of Peter di Bernardone to hear". Speaking thus he would recall his humble origin. (54) And that he might perfectly show himself to be contemptible, and afford to the rest an example of true confession, he was not ashamed, when he had offended in anything, to confess it when he was preaching before all the people. Nay more, if he chanced to have any evil thought about any one, or happened to let fall an angry word, he would straightway confess the sin to him against whom he had thought or said anything evil, and beg his pardon. His conscience (witness of all innocence) guarded itself with all solicitude and did not let him rest until

soothing words had healed the mental wound. Assuredly in his noteworthy deeds of every kind he craved not notoriety but profit, avoiding admiration by every means that he might never fall into vanity.

Alas for us who thus have lost thee, worthy father, pattern of all well-doing and humility! Surely by a just judgment have we lost him whom when we had him we cared not to know!

CHAPTER XX

Of the longing whereby he was moved to receive martyrdom, journeying first to Spain and then to Syria: and how God through him delivered the sailors from peril by multiplying the provisions

55. GLOWING with the love of God, the most blessed father Francis was ever zealous to set his hand to brave deeds; and, walking with heart enlarged in the way of God's commandments, he longed to reach the height of perfection. Accordingly in the sixth year of his conversion, burning with the utmost desire for holy martyrdom, he determined to pass over to the regions of Syria to preach the Christian faith, and repentance to the Saracens and the other unbelievers. After going on board a ship in order to journey thither, he and his fellow-travellers found themselves by reason of contrary winds in the regions of Sclavonia. But when he saw that he was baulked of his great desire, after a short interval he besought some sailors who were going to Ancona to take him with them, since hardly any ship could sail to Syria that year. They however obstinately refused, for lack

of payment, but the Saint of God, with full trust in the Lord's kindness, went on board by stealth with his companion. Then by God's providence a man came on board without any one's knowledge bringing the necessary provisions, and he called to him one of the crew who feared God and said, "Take all these things with thee and faithfully give them to those poor men in hiding on the ship in time of need". And so it came to pass that when a great storm had arisen and the crew who had toiled in rowing many days had eaten all their provisions, those only of the poor man Francis were left: and these by God's grace and power were so multiplied that although the voyage lasted several days more, they were abundantly sufficient to supply the wants of all until they reached the port of Ancona. So when the sailors saw that they had escaped the perils of the sea through God's servant Francis, they gave thanks to Almighty God who ever shows Himself in His servants wonderful and worthy to be loved.

56. Francis the servant of the high God quitted the sea and walked on the land, and cleaving it with the ploughshare of the word, sowed the seed of life and brought forth blessed fruit. For straightway a number of good and fit men, clerical and lay, flying from the world and manfully crushing the Devil, devotedly followed Francis in life and purpose by the grace and will of the Most High. But though the Gospel vine-branch might produce from itself abundance of the choicest fruits, nevertheless the lofty purpose to attain martyrdom and the ardent longing for it in nowise grew cold in him; and before long he took his journey toward Morocco that he might preach Christ's Gospel

to the Miramamolin[1] and his associates. He was urged by such longing that he sometimes left the companion of his pilgrimage behind and would hasten on, inebriated in spirit, to fulfil his purpose. But when he had already reached Spain, the good God (who was pleased of His mere goodness to be mindful of me and of many) withstood him to the face, and, that he might proceed no farther, recalled him by a threatened illness from the journey he had begun, (57) and on his return shortly afterwards to the Church of S. Maria de Portiuncula, some men of learning and some of noble birth joined him most acceptably. These, since he was a man of the noblest and discreetest temper, he treated with fitting distinction, most tenderly paying to each one his due. Verily, being endowed with eminent discretion, he had wise regard in all things to the claims of each man's dignity. But he could not yet rest without even more fervently following the blessed impulse of his spirit; and in the thirteenth year of his conversion, when severe and daily combats were raging between Christians and pagans, he took a companion with him and went to the regions of Syria; nor did he fear to present himself to the sight of the Soldan of the Saracens.[2] But who can tell with what stedfastness of mind he stood before him, with what power of spirit he spoke to him, with what eloquence and confidence he answered those who were reviling the Christian law? For before he came to the Soldan he had been seized by the [Soldan's] associates, insulted and beaten, yet was

[1] Otherwise Miramolin; a title, not a proper name.

[2] A.D. 1219.

he not afraid, nor feared the threat of torments, nor blenched at the menace of death. But though he was shamefully treated by many who were moved with bitter hostility and dislike, he was most honourably received by the Soldan. For he paid him what honour he could and tried to sway his mind toward worldly riches by the offer of many gifts. But when the Soldan saw that he most stoutly held all such things in contempt like dung, he was filled with the utmost amazement and gazed on him as a man unlike almost all men. He was deeply stirred by his words and heard him very willingly. But in all this the Lord did not fulfil S. Francis' desire, reserving for him the privilege of an unparalleled favour.

CHAPTER XXI

Of his preaching to the birds and of the obedience of the creatures

58. DURING the time when (as has been said) many joined themselves to the brethren the most blessed father Francis was journeying through the valley of Spoleto, and came to a spot near Bevagna where a very great number of birds of different sorts were gathered together, viz., doves, rooks and those other birds that are called in the vulgar tongue *monade.*[1] When he saw them, being a man of the most fervent temper and also very tender and affectionate toward all the lower and irrational creatures, Francis the most blessed servant of God left his companions in the way and ran eagerly toward the birds. When he was come

[1] Al. *monacle, monedule, monacule.*

close to them and saw that they were awaiting him, he gave them his accustomed greeting. But, not a little surprised that the birds did not fly away (as they are wont to do) he was filled with exceeding joy and humbly begged them to hear the word of God: and, after saying many things to them he added: "My brother birds, much ought ye to praise your Creator, and ever to love Him who has given you feathers for clothing, wings for flight, and all that ye had need of. God has made you noble among His creatures, for He has given you a habitation in the purity of the air, and, whereas ye neither sow nor reap, He Himself doth still protect and govern you without any care of your own." On this (as he himself and the brethren who had been with him used to say) those little birds rejoicing in wondrous fashion, after their nature, began to stretch out their necks, to spread their wings, to open their beaks and to gaze on him. And then he went to and fro amidst them, touching their heads and bodies with his tunic. At length he blessed them, and, having made the sign of the cross, gave them leave to fly away to another place. But the blessed father went on his way with his companions, rejoicing and giving thanks to God Whom all creatures humbly acknowledge and revere. Being now, by grace, become simple (though he was not so by nature) he began to charge himself with negligence for not having preached to the birds before, since they listened so reverently to God's word. And so it came to pass that from that day he diligently exhorted all winged creatures, all beasts, all reptiles and even creatures insensible, to praise and love the Creator, since daily, on

his calling on the Saviour's name, he had knowledge of their obedience by his own experience. (59) One day (for instance) when he was come to the fortress called Alviano to set forth the word of God, he went up on an eminence where all could see him, and asked for silence. But though all the company held their peace and stood reverently by, a great number of swallows who were building their nests in that same place were chirping and chattering loudly. And, as Francis could not be heard by the men for their chirping, he spoke to the birds and said: "My sisters, the swallows, it is now time for me to speak too, because you have been saying enough all this time. Listen to the word of God and be in silence, and quiet, until the sermon is finished!" And those little birds (to the amazement and wonder of all the bystanders) kept silence forthwith, and did not move from that place till the preaching was ended. So those men, when they had seen that sign, were filled with the greatest admiration, and said: "Truly this man is a Saint, and a friend of the Most High". And with the utmost devotion they hastened at least to touch his clothes, praising and blessing God.

And it is certainly wonderful how even the irrational creatures recognised his tender affection towards them and perceived beforehand the sweetness of his love; (60) for once when he was staying at the fortress of Greccio, one of the brethren brought him a live leveret that had been caught in a snare; and when the blessed man saw it he was moved with compassion and said: "Brother leveret, come to me. Why didst thou let thyself be so deceived?" And forthwith the leveret,

on being released by the brother who was holding him, fled to the holy man, and, without being driven thither by any one, lay down in his bosom as being the safest place. When he had rested there a little while the holy father, caressing him with maternal affection, let him go, so that he might freely return to the woodland. At last, after the leveret had been put down on the ground many times, and had every time returned to the holy man's bosom, he bade the brethren carry it into a wood which was hard by. Something of the same kind happened with a rabbit (which is a very wild creature) when he was on the island in the lake of Perugia.[1] He was also moved by the same feeling of pity towards fish, for if they had been caught, and he had the opportunity, he would throw them back alive into the water, bidding them beware of being caught a second time.

61. Once accordingly when he was sitting in a boat near a port on the lake of Rieti, a fisherman caught a big fish called a tench, and respectfully offered it to him. He took it up joyfully and kindly, began to call it by the name of brother, and then putting it back out of the boat into the water he began devoutly to bless the name of the Lord. And while he continued thus for some time in prayer, the said fish played about in the water close to the boat, and did not leave the place where Francis had put him, until, having finished his prayer, the holy man of God gave him leave to depart. Even so did the glorious father Francis, walking in the way of obedience, and taking upon him perfectly the

[1] See *Fioretti*, chap. vii.

yoke of Divine submission, acquire great dignity before God in that the creatures obeyed him. For water was even turned to wine for him when he was once in grievous sickness at the hermitage of Sant' Urbano;[1] and when he had tasted it he got well so easily that all believed it to be a Divine miracle, as indeed it was. And truly he is a Saint whom the creatures thus obey and at whose nod the very elements are transmuted for other uses.

CHAPTER XXII

Of his preaching at Ascoli; and how the sick were healed in his absence by things that his hand had touched

62. AT the time when (as has been said) the venerable father Francis preached to the birds, as he went round about the cities and fortresses scattering seeds of blessing everywhere, he came to the city of Ascoli. Here, when according to his wont he was most fervently uttering the word of God, almost all the people, changed by the right hand of the Highest, were filled with such grace and devotion that in their eagerness to see and hear him they trod on one another. And at that time thirty men, clerks and lay-people, received from him the habit of holy Religion. Such was the faith of men and women, such their devotion of mind toward God's Saint that he who could but touch his garment called himself happy. If he entered any city the clergy were joyful, the bells were rung, the men exulted, the women rejoiced together, the children clapped their hands and often took

[1] In the neighbourhood of Narni in Umbria.

boughs of trees and went in procession to meet him singing Psalms. Heretical wickedness was confounded, the Church's faith was magnified; and while the faithful shouted for joy, the heretics slunk away. For the tokens of holiness that appeared in him were such, that no one durst speak against him; seeing that the crowds hung on him alone. Amidst and above all else he pronounced that the faith of the Holy Roman Church, wherein alone consists the salvation of all that are to be saved, must be kept, revered, and imitated. He revered the priests and embraced the whole hierarchy with exceeding affection. (63) The people would offer him loaves to bless, and would keep them for long after, and by tasting them they were healed of divers sicknesses. Many times also in their great faith in him they cut up his tunic so that he was left almost naked; and, what is more wonderful, some even recovered their health by means of objects which the holy father had touched with his hand, as happened in the case of a woman who lived in a little village near Arezzo. She was with child, and when the time of her delivery came was in labour for several days and hung between life and death in incredible suffering. Her neighbours and kinsfolk had heard that the blessed Francis was going to a certain hermitage and would pass by that way. But while they were waiting for him it chanced that he went to the place by a different way, for he was riding because he was weak and ill. When he reached the place he sent back the horse to the man who had lent it him out of charity, by a certain brother named Peter. Brother Peter, in bringing the horse back, passed through the

place where the suffering woman was. The inhabitants on seeing him ran to him in haste, thinking he was the blessed Francis, but were exceedingly disappointed when they found he was not. At length they began to inquire together if anything might be found which the blessed Francis had touched with his hand; and after spending a long time over this they at last hit upon the reins which he had held in his hand when riding: so they took the bit out of the mouth of the horse on which the holy father had sat, and laid the reins which he had touched with his own hands upon the woman: and forthwith her peril was removed and she brought forth her child with joy and in safety.

64. Gualfreduccio, who lived at Castel della Pieve, a religious man fearing and worshipping God with all his house, had by him a cord wherewith the blessed Francis had once been girded. Now it came to pass that in that place many men and not a few women were suffering from various sicknesses and fevers; and this man went through the houses of the sick, and, after dipping the cord in water or mixing with water some of the strands, made the sufferers drink of it, and so, in Christ's name, they all recovered. Now these things were done in blessed Francis' absence, besides many others which we could in nowise unfold in the longest discourse. But a few of those things which the Lord our God deigned to work by means of his presence we will briefly insert in this work.

CHAPTER XXIII

How he healed a cripple at Toscanella and a paralytic at Narni

65. ONCE when Francis the Saint of God was making a long circuit through various regions to preach the Gospel of God's kingdom he came to a city called Toscanella. Here, while he was sowing the seed of life, as he was wont, he was entertained by a knight of that same city whose only son was a cripple and weak in all his body. Though the child was of tender years, he had passed the age of weaning; but he still remained in a cradle. But the boy's father, seeing the man of God to be endued with such holiness, humbly fell at his feet and besought him to heal his son. Francis, deeming himself to be unprofitable and unworthy of such power and grace, for a long time refused to do it. At last, conquered by the urgency of the knight's entreaties, after offering up prayer he laid his hand on the boy, blesssd him, and lifted him up. And in the sight of all the boy straightway arose whole in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and began to walk hither and thither about the house.

66. Once when Francis the man of God had come to Narni and was staying there several days, a man of that city named Peter was lying in bed paralysed. For five months he had been so completely deprived of the use of all his limbs that he could in nowise lift himself up or move at all; and thus, having lost all help from feet, hands and head, he could only move his tongue and open his eyes. But on hearing that S. Francis was come to Narni he sent a messenger to

the Bishop to ask that he would, for Divine compassion's sake, be pleased to send the servant of God Most High to him, for he trusted that he would be delivered, by the sight and presence of the Saint, from the infirmity whereby he was holden. And so indeed it came to pass; for when the blessed Francis was come to him he made the sign of the cross over him from head to feet, and forthwith drove away all his sickness and restored him to his former health.

CHAPTER XXIV

How he gave sight to a blind woman, and at Gubbio straightened another, whose hands were contracted

67. A WOMAN of the above-named city who had been struck blind was found worthy of receiving the longed-for light immediately on the blessed Francis' making the sign of the cross over her eyes.

At Gubbio there was a woman both whose hands were contracted so that she could do nothing with them. As soon as she knew that S. Francis had entered the city she ran to him, and with miserable and woe-begone face showed him her deformed hands and began to pray that he would deign to touch them He was moved with compassion, touched her hand. and healed them. And straightway the woman returned joyfully to her house, made a cheesecake with her own hands and offered it to the holy man; he took a little in token of kindness, and bade her and her household eat the rest.

CHAPTER XXV

How he delivered a brother from the falling sickness, or from a devil; and how he delivered a demoniac woman at the fortress of S. Gemini

68. THERE was a brother who often suffered from a grievous infirmity that was horrible to see; and I know not what name to give it; though some think it was caused by a malignant devil. For oftentimes he was dashed down and with a terrible look in his eyes he wallowed foaming; sometimes his limbs were contracted, sometimes extended, sometimes they were folded and twisted together, and sometimes they became hard and rigid. Sometimes, tense and rigid all over, with his feet touching his head, he would be lifted up in the air to the height of a man's stature and would then suddenly spring back to the earth. The holy father Francis pitying his grievous sickness went to him and after offering up prayer signed him with the cross and blessed him. And suddenly he was made whole, and never afterwards suffered from this distressing infirmity.

69. One day when the most blessed father Francis was passing through the diocese of Narni he reached a fortress known as that of S. Gemini, and while he was there preaching the Gospel of God's kingdom, he with three brethren were entertained by a man who feared and worshipped God and was very well reported of in that town. But his wife, as was known to all the inhabitants of the place, was vexed with a devil; and so her husband besought the blessed

Francis for her, trusting that by his merits she might be delivered. But S. Francis, desiring in his simplicity rather to be had in contempt than through ostentation of sanctity to be uplifted by the favour of this world, altogether refused to do this thing. At length, since God was concerned in the case, he yielded to the prayers of the many who were entreating him. So he called the three brethren who were with him, and setting each one in a corner of the house, he said to them, "Brethren, let us pray to the Lord for this woman, that God may break off from her the devil's yoke, to His praise and glory. Stand we apart (he added) in the corners of the house, that this evil spirit may not be able to escape us or delude us by trying to sneak into the corners." Accordingly, having finished his prayer blessed Francis went in the power of the Spirit to the woman who was being miserably tormented and crying horribly; and he said, "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, I charge thee, devil, on obedience, to go out of her nor dare to impede her any more". Hardly had he finished speaking when the devil with furious roaring rushed out so swiftly that the holy father thought himself under some illusion, because of the sudden healing of the woman and the prompt obedience of the devil. And forthwith he departed from that place shamefacedly, for God's providence had so wrought in the matter that there might be no place for vainglory on his part. Accordingly, another time when blessed Francis was passing through that same place and brother Elias was with him, the woman as soon as she knew of his coming arose forthwith and ran through the piazza

after him begging that he would deign to speak to her; but he would not, knowing that it was the woman out of whom he had once cast a devil by the power of God. But she was kissing his footprints, giving thanks to God and S. Francis His servant who had delivered her from the hand of death. At length, urged by the entreaty of brother Elias, the Saint spoke to her, after having been certified by many that it was she that had been sick (as has been said) and had been delivered.

CHAPTER XXVI

How at Città di Castello also he cast out a devil

70. AT Città di Castello also there was a woman possessed by a devil; and when the most blessed father Francis was there she was brought to the house in which he was staying. But she remained outside and began to gnash with her teeth, to make faces and to utter lamentable roarings,[1] after the manner of unclean spirits; and many of the people in that city of both sexes came up and besought S. Francis for the woman; for that evil spirit had long vexed her by his torments and had troubled them by his roarings. Then the holy father sent to her a brother who was with him, with the intention of finding out whether it really was a devil, or only a woman's deception. When the woman saw the brother she began to mock him, knowing that he was not S. Francis. The holy

[1] The word used, *barrire*, refers especially to the trumpeting of elephants.

father was praying within, and when he had finished his prayer he came out; and then the woman began to tremble and to roll on the ground, unable to stand his power. S. Francis called her to him and said, "In virtue of obedience I bid thee go out of her, thou unclean spirit," and he straightway left her, doing her no hurt, and departed very full of wrath.

Thanks be to God Almighty, who worketh all in all! However, since we have determined to set forth not miracles (which do not make holiness but show it), but rather the excellence of S. Francis' life and the flawless pattern of his conversation, we will omit the miracles for their abundance and return to works of eternal salvation.

CHAPTER XXVII

Of his serenity and stedfastness of mind and of his preaching before the Lord Pope Honorius; and how he committed himself and the brethren to the Lord Hugo, Bishop of Ostia

71. FRANCIS the man of God had been taught to seek not his own things but those which he might perceive to be specially expedient for the salvation of others; but yet above all things he longed to be dissolved and to be with Christ. Wherefore his chiefest study was to be free from all the things that are in the world, lest the serenity of his mind might even for a moment be troubled by the taint of any dust. He made himself insensible to the din of all outward things; and, gathering up with all his might from every side the outward senses, and keeping the

natural impulses in check, occupied himself with God alone. "In the clefts of the rock" he built his nest, and "in a hollow of the wall" was his habitation.[1] Surely in fruitful devotion did he roam round lonely (*caelibes*) dwelling-places, and, wholly emptied [of himself], rested long in the Saviour's wounds. Accordingly he often used to choose out solitary places in order that he might therein wholly direct his mind to God; but yet, when he saw that the time was favourable, he was not slothful in attending to business and in applying himself gladly to the salvation of his neighbours. For his safest haven was prayer: not prayer for one moment, not vacant or presumptuous prayer, but long-continued, full of devotion, calm and humble; if he began late he scarce ended with morning. Walking, sitting, eating and drinking, he was intent on prayer. He would often go alone by night to pray in churches which were deserted, or in lonely places, wherein, under the protection of God's grace, he got the better of many fears and distresses of mind. (72) In such places he fought hand to hand with the Devil, who not only smote him inwardly by temptations, but terrified him outwardly through the falling in and overthrow [of buildings].

But God's valiant knight, knowing that his Lord can do all things everywhere, yielded not to terrors, but said in his heart: "Thou canst no more brandish the weapons of thy wickedness against me here, O evil one, than if we were in public, in the sight of all". Truly he was most stedfast, nor did he attend to any-

[1] See Canticles ii. 14.

thing but what was the Lord's. For when, as very often happened, he was preaching God's word among many thousands of people, Francis was as confident as if he had been speaking with an intimate companion. He saw the greatest concourse of people as one man; and to one man he preached most carefully, as if to a multitude. His purity of mind furnished him with confidence in preaching; and without premeditation he would utter things wonderful and unheard before by all. Sometimes, however, it happened, if he had meditated his sermon beforehand, that when the people were come together he had forgotten what he had thought of, and could not say anything else. Then, without any embarrassment, he confessed to the people that he had thought of many things beforehand of which he could remember nothing at all; and suddenly he would be filled with such eloquence that he moved his hearers to admiration. At other times, however, when he could say nothing, he dismissed the people with his blessing, having by that alone preached to them most effectually.

73. But once, when he had come to Rome on business of the Order,[1] he greatly longed to speak before the Lord Pope Honorius and the venerable Cardinals. When the Lord Hugo, the glorious Bishop of Ostia, who revered the Saint of God with singular affection understood this, he was filled with apprehension as well as joy, admiring the fervour of the holy man, and beholding his simple purity. But trusting in the mercy of the Almighty, which never fails in time of need

[1] *Cf.* below, II., 25

those who piously wait upon it, he brought Francis into the presence of the Lord Pope and the reverend Cardinals, and Francis, standing before these great princes, after receiving [the Pope's] permission and blessing, boldly began to speak. And such was the fervour of his spirit as he spoke that, unable to contain himself for joy, as he uttered the words with his mouth he moved his feet as if dancing, not as in wantonness, but as glowing with the fire of Divine love; not provoking laughter, but extorting tears of grief. For many of them were pricked at the heart as they wondered at God's grace and the stedfastness of the man. But the venerable Lord Bishop of Ostia was in an agony of suspense, praying to God with all his might that the simplicity of the blessed man might not be despised: for the Saint's glory or disgrace would rebound on him since he had been appointed a father over the Saint's family: (74) for S. Francis had cleaved to him as a child to his father and an only son to his mother, sleeping and resting securely in the bosom of his clemency. Verily that Cardinal fulfilled the office and did the work of a pastor, though he had left to the holy man the name of pastor. The blessed father provided what was needful, but that happy lord carried the provisions into effect. Oh how many (especially at the beginning of the undertaking) were plotting to overthrow the new planting of the Order! Oh how many were setting themselves to smother the choice vine which the kindly hand of the Lord was newly planting in the world! How many were striving to steal and consume its first and purest fruits! But they were all slain by the sword of that so reverend lord and

father and were brought to naught. For he was a stream of eloquence, a wall of the Church, a champion of the truth, and a lover of the humble. Blessed therefore and memorable is that day whereon God's Saint committed himself to so venerable a lord. For once when that lord was holding (as he often did) the office of legate of the Apostolic See in Tuscany, the blessed Francis, who had not as yet many brethren and was intending to visit France, came to Florence where the said bishop was then residing. The two men had not yet been united in special intimacy, but the mere report of the blessed life [of each] had joined them together by mutual affection and charity. (75) And because it was blessed Francis' custom on entering any city or place to go to the bishop or priest, when he heard of the presence of so great a pontiff he presented himself to his clemency with great reverence. And when the lord bishop saw him, he received him with humble devotion—even as he always treated all who professed holy Religion and those especially who bore the noble ensign of blessed poverty and holy simplicity. And forasmuch as he was ever forward to supply the needs of poor men and to handle their business with special care, he diligently inquired the cause of Francis' coming, and heard his purpose most graciously. Then, as he saw him despising earthly things above other men and glowing with that fire which Jesus sent on the earth, from that moment his soul was glued to the soul of Francis, he devoutly besought his prayers, and most gladly offered him his protection in all things; and accordingly he advised Francis not to finish the journey he had begun but to

be diligent in the watchful care and keeping of those whom the Lord God had committed to him. But when S. Francis saw how tender was the disposition of so reverend a lord, how warm his affection, and how effectual his speech, he rejoiced with exceeding great joy, and then, falling at his feet, handed over and committed himself and his brethren to him with devout mind.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Of the spirit of charity and the compassionate disposition wherewith he glowed toward the poor: and of his treatment of a sheep, and lambs

76. FRANCIS, the poor man, the father of the poor, making himself like unto the poor in all things, used to be distressed to see any one poorer than himself, not because he coveted vain renown, but only from a feeling of sympathy; and though he was content with a very common and rough tunic, he often longed to share it with some poor man. But in order that this richest of poor men, led by his great feeling of tenderness, might (in whatsoever way) help the poor, he would in very cold weather ask the rich of this world to lend him a mantle or furs. When in their devotion they complied with his request even more readily than he had made it, he would say to them: "I will take this from you on the understanding that you do not expect to have it back any more"; and then with joy and exultation he would clothe the first poor man he met with whatever had been given him. He was very much distressed if he saw any poor

man harshly spoken to, or if he heard any one utter a curse against any creature.

For instance it happened that a brother had given a sharp answer to a poor man who had asked alms, saying: "See to it, for perhaps thou art a rich man feigning poverty". When S. Francis, the father of the poor, heard of it he was deeply grieved, and sharply rebuked the brother who had spoken thus, and bade him strip himself before the poor man, kiss his feet and beg his pardon.[1] For he used to say: "He who reviles a poor man does a wrong to Christ, for the poor man bears the noble ensign of Christ Who made Himself poor in this world for us". Often therefore when he found poor people laden with wood or other burdens he would help them by giving the support of his own shoulders, even though very weak. (77) He overflowed with the spirit of charity, pitying not only men who were suffering need, but even the dumb brutes, reptiles, birds, and other creatures with and without sensation. But among all kinds of animals he loved little lambs with a special love and a readier affection, because the humility of our Lord Jesus Christ is, in Holy Scripture, most frequently and aptly illustrated by the simile of a lamb. So too especially he would embrace more fondly and behold more gladly all those things wherein might be found some allegorical similitude of the Son of God. Thus when he was once journeying through the March of Ancona, and after preaching God's word in that city had set out towards Osimo with Messer Paul whom he had appointed Minister of

[1] *Cf.* below, II., 85.

all the brethren in that province, he found in the fields a shepherd feeding a herd of she-goats and he-goats. Among the multitude of goats there was one little sheep going along in humble fashion and quietly grazing. When Francis saw her he stopped, and, moved in his heart with grief, said to the brother who accompanied him, groaning aloud: "Seest thou not this sheep which is walking so meekly among these she-goats and he-goats? I tell thee that even so our Lord Jesus Christ walked meek and lowly among the Pharisees and chief priests. Wherefore I ask thee, my son, for love of Him, to take pity with me on this little sheep, and let us pay the price and get her out from among these goats." (78) And brother Paul, wondering at his grief, began to grieve with him. But they had nothing but the poor tunics they wore, and as they were anxiously considering how the price might be paid, a merchant who was on a journey came up, and offered the price they desired. They took the sheep, giving thanks to God, and came to Osimo; and went in to the bishop of that city, who received them with great reverence.

The lord bishop, however, wondered both at the sheep which the man of God was leading and at the affection wherewith he was moved toward her. But after Christ's servant had unfolded to him at some length the parable of the sheep, the bishop, pricked at the heart, gave thanks to God for the purity of the man of God. Next day, on leaving the city, Francis considered what he should do with the sheep, and by his companion's advice he handed it over to a monastery of the handmaids of Christ at S. Severino to be taken

care of. The venerable handmaids of Christ received the sheep with joy as a great gift bestowed on them by God, and they kept it carefully for a long time, and wove of the wool a tunic which they sent to the blessed father Francis at the church of S. Maria de Portiuncula on the occasion of a Chapter [of the Order]. The Saint of God received it with great reverence and exultation of mind, and embraced and kissed it again and again, inviting all the bystanders to share his joy.

79. Another time when he was passing through that same March and the same brother was gladly accompanying him, he met a man carrying two lambs, bound and hanging over his shoulders, which he was taking to market to sell. When blessed Francis heard them bleating he was moved with compassion, and came near and touched them, showing pity for them like a mother towards her crying child. And he said to the man: "Why dost thou thus torment my brother lambs by carrying them bound and hanging thus?" The man answered: "I am taking them to market to sell, for I must get a price for them". "What will become of them afterwards?" said the holy man. "The buyers will kill and eat them." "God forbid," answered the Saint. "This must not be; but take the cloak I am wearing for their price, and give the lambs to me." The man gave him the lambs and took the cloak gladly, for it was of much greater value. (S. Francis had borrowed it that day from a faithful man, to keep off the cold.) When he had received the lambs he carefully considered what he should do with them, and after consulting with his companion gave them back to the man, charging him never to sell them or do them hurt, but to keep them, feed them, and take good care of them.

CHAPTER XXIX

Of the love which he bore to all creatures for the Creator's sake. Description of his inner and outer man

80. IT were exceeding long, and indeed impossible, to enumerate and collect all the things which the glorious father Francis did and taught while he lived in the flesh. For who could ever express the height of the affection by which he was carried away as concerning all the things that are God's? Who could tell the sweetness which he enjoyed in contemplating in His creatures the wisdom, power and goodness of the Creator? Truly such thoughts often filled him with wondrous and unspeakable joy as he beheld the sun, or raised his eyes to the moon, or gazed on the stars, and the firmament. O simple piety! O pious simplicity! Even towards little worms he glowed with exceeding love, because he had read that word concerning the Saviour: "I am a worm, and no man". Wherefore he used to pick them up in the way and put them in a safe place, that they might not be crushed by the feet of passers-by. What shall I say of other lower creatures, when in winter he would cause honey or the best wine to be provided for bees, that they might not perish from cold?[1] And he used to extol, to the glory of the Lord, the efficacy of their works and the excellence of their skill with such abundant utterance that many times he would pass a day in praise of them and of the other creatures. For

[1] *Cf.* below, II., 165.

as of old the three children placed in the burning fiery furnace invited all the elements to praise and glorify the Creator of the universe, so this man also, full of the spirit of God, ceased not to glorify, praise, and bless in all the elements and creatures the Creator and Governor of them all. (81) What gladness thinkest thou the beauty of flowers afforded to his mind as he observed the grace of their form and perceived the sweetness of their perfume? For he turned forthwith the eye of consideration to the beauty of that Flower which, brightly coming forth in springtime from the root of Jesse, has by its perfume raised up countless thousands of the dead. And when he came upon a great quantity of flowers he would preach to them and invite them to praise the Lord, just as if they had been gifted with reason. So also cornfields and vineyards, stones, woods, and all the beauties of the field, fountains of waters, all the verdure of gardens, earth and fire, air and wind would he with sincerest purity exhort to the love and willing service of God. In short he called all creatures by the name of brother, and in a surpassing manner, of which other men had no experience, he discerned the hidden things of creation with the eye of the heart, as one who had already escaped into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Now, O good Jesus, in the heavens with the angels he is praising Thee as admirable who when on earth did surely preach Thee to all creatures as lovable. (82) For when he named Thy name, O holy Lord, his emotion passed man's understanding: he was all joy, filled with the purest gladness, and seemed in truth to be a new man and one of the other world. Accordingly

wherever he found any writing, Divine or human, whether by the way, in a house, or on the floor, he picked it up most reverently and placed it in some sacred or decent place, in case the name of the Lord or anything pertaining thereto should have been written on it. And one day, when one of the brethren asked him why he so diligently picked up even writings of pagans, and writings in which the name of the Lord was not traced, he gave this answer: "My son, it is because the letters are there whereof the most glorious name of the Lord God is composed. The good, therefore, that is in the writing belongs not to the pagans nor to any men, but to God alone, of whom is all good." And, what is not less to be wondered at, when he caused any letters of greeting or admonition to be written, he would not suffer a single letter or syllable to be cancelled, even though (as often happened) it were superfluous or misplaced.

83. O how fair, how bright, how glorious did he appear in innocency of life, in simplicity of word, in purity of heart, in the love of God, in charity to the brethren, in ardent obedience, in willing submission, in angelic aspect! He was charming in his manners, of gentle disposition, easy in his talk; most apt in exhortation, most faithful in what he was put in trust with, far-seeing in counsel, effectual in business, gracious in all things; calm in mind, sweet in temper, sober in spirit, uplifted in contemplation, assiduous in prayer, and fervent in all things. He was stedfast in purpose, firm in virtue, persevering in grace, and in all things the same. He was swift to pardon and slow to be angry. He was of ready wit, and had an excellent memory, he

was subtle in discussion, circumspect in choice, and simple in all things; stern to himself, tender to others, in all things discreet. He was a man most eloquent, of cheerful countenance, of kindly aspect, free from cowardice, and destitute of arrogance. He was of middle height, inclining to shortness; his head was of moderate size, and round; his face somewhat long and prominent, his forehead smooth and small; his eyes were black, of moderate size, and with a candid look; his hair was dark, his eyebrows straight; his nose symmetrical, thin, and straight; his ears upright, but small; his temples smooth. His words were kindly, [but] fiery and penetrating; his voice was powerful, sweet-toned, clear and sonorous. His teeth were set close together, white, and even; his lips thin and fine, his beard black and rather scanty, his neck slender; his shoulders straight, his arms short, his hands attenuated, with long fingers and nails; his legs slight, his feet small, his skin fine, and his flesh very spare. His clothing was rough, his sleep very brief, his hand most bountiful. And, for that he was most humble, he showed all meekness to all men, adapting himself in profitable fashion to the behaviour of all. Among the saints, holier [than they], among the sinners he was like one of themselves. Help therefore the sinners, most holy father, thou lover of sinners, and deign, we pray thee, of thine abundant mercy, to raise up by thy most glorious advocacy those whom thou seest miserably lying in the defilement of their misdeeds.

CHAPTER XXX

Of the manger that he made on Christmas day

84. HIS chief intention, his principal desire and supreme purpose was in and through all things to observe the holy Gospel, and with all watchfulness, all zeal, all the longing of his mind and all the fervour of his heart perfectly to follow the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ and tread in His footsteps. He would recall His words with assiduous meditation and dwell on His works with the most piercing consideration. And chiefly did the humility of the Incarnation and the charity of the Passion so occupy his memory that he would scarce ponder over anything else. Therefore that which he did at the fortress called Greccio on the birthday of our Lord Jesus Christ in the third year before the day of his glorious decease is to be recorded and dwelt on with reverent memory.

There was in that place a man named John, of good repute, but of better life, whom blessed Francis loved with special affection, because, having been a man of the most noble and honourable position in his town, he had trampled on the nobility of the flesh, and followed after the nobility of the mind. This man did blessed Francis send for (as he was often wont) about fifteen days before the Nativity of the Lord, and said to him: "If thou wilt that we celebrate the present festival of the Lord at Greccio, make haste to go before and diligently prepare what I tell thee. For I would make memorial of that Child who was born in

Bethlehem, and in some sort behold with bodily eyes His infant hardships; how He lay in a manger on the hay, with the ox and the ass standing by." When the good and faithful man heard it, he made haste and prepared in the aforesaid place all the things that the Saint had told him of.

85. The day of gladness drew nigh, the time of exultation arrived. The brethren were summoned from many "places";[1] the men and women of that town with exulting hearts prepared tapers and torches, as they were able, to illuminate that night which with its radiant Star has illuminated all the days and years. At length the Saint of God came, and finding all things prepared, beheld them and rejoiced. The manger had been made ready, the hay was brought, the ox and the ass were led in.

There Simplicity was honoured, Poverty exalted, Humility commended; and of Greccio there was made as it were a new Bethlehem. The night was lit up as the day, and was delightsome to men and beasts. The people came, and at the new Mystery rejoiced with new rejoicings. The woodland rang with voices, the rocks made answer to the jubilant throng. The brethren sang, yielding due praises to the Lord, and all that night resounded with jubilation. The Saint of God stood before the manger, full of sighs, overcome with tenderness and filled with wondrous joy. The solemnities of Mass were celebrated over the manger, and the priest enjoyed a new consolation. (86) The

[1] A technical term by which the early Franciscan convents were known.

Saint of God was vested with Levitical ornaments, for he was a Levite, and with sonorous voice chanted the holy Gospel—an earnest, sweet, clear and loud-sounding voice, inviting all to the highest rewards. Then he preached to the people who stood around, and uttered mellifluous words concerning the birth of the poor King and the little town of Bethlehem.—(And often, when he would name Christ Jesus, aglow with exceeding love he would call Him the Child of Bethlehem, and, uttering the word "Bethlehem" in the manner of a sheep bleating, he filled his mouth with the sound, but even more his whole self with the sweet affection. Moreover, in naming "the Child of Bethlehem" or "Jesus" he would, as it were, lick his lips, relishing with happy palate, and swallowing the sweetness of that word.)—There the gifts of the Almighty were multiplied, and a vision of wondrous efficacy was seen by a certain man; for in the manger he saw a little child lying lifeless, to whom the Saint of God seemed to draw near and (as it were) to rouse the child from the lethargy of sleep. Nor was this vision incongruous; for the child Jesus had been given over to forgetfulness in the hearts of many in whom, by the working of His Grace, He was raised up again through His servant Francis and imprinted on a diligent memory.

At length the solemn vigil was ended, and each one returned with joy to his own place.

87. The hay placed in the manger was kept, in order that thereby the Lord might save beasts of burden and other animals, even as He multiplied His holy mercy. And verily so it came to pass, for many

animals in the region round about which had divers diseases were freed from their sicknesses by eating of that hay. Nay more, women in long and grievous labour were safely delivered by putting some of the hay on themselves, and a crowd of persons of either sex suffering from various ailments gained their long-wished-for health at that same place. Finally the place of the manger was hallowed as a temple to the Lord ; and in honour of the most blessed father Francis, over the manger an altar was reared and a church dedicated, to the end that where beasts had once eaten fodder of hay, men might thenceforth for the healing of soul and body eat the flesh of the spotless and undefiled Lamb, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who in highest and unspeakable charity gave Himself for us, Who liveth and reigneth with the Father and the Holy Ghost, God eternally glorious, world without end. Amen, Alleluia, Alleluia.

HERE ENDS THE FIRST PART OF THE LIFE AND ACTS OF BLESSED FRANCIS.

PART II

HERE BEGINS THE SECOND PART, CONCERNING THE LIFE OF OUR MOST BLESSED FATHER FRANCIS DURING [THE LAST] TWO YEARS ONLY, AND CONCERNING HIS HAPPY DECEASE.

CHAPTER I

88. IN the former treatise, which (by the Saviour's grace) we have brought to a fitting conclusion, we have written a narrative, such as it is, of the life and acts of our most blessed father Francis down to the eighteenth year of his conversion. But his remaining exploits, beginning from the last year but one of his life, according as we have been able to learn them rightly, we will briefly add to this work: and at present we intend to note down those things alone which suggest themselves as the most necessary, so that they who wish to say more may still be able to find something to add.

In the 1226th year of our Lord's Incarnation, in the fourteenth Indiction, on Sunday the fourth day of October, in the city of Assisi, of which he was a native, at S. Maria de Portiuncula, where he first planted the Order of Lesser Brethren, our most blessed father Francis, having fulfilled twenty years from the time when he had perfectly cleaved to Christ, following the life and footsteps of the Apostles, came forth from the prison of the flesh and took his happy flight to the abode of the heavenly spirits, perfecting what he had

begun. His hallowed and holy body was placed and honourably buried with hymns and praises in that city, where by many miracles it shines to the glory of the Almighty.

89. Now when this man was in the first flower of his youth he was little or not at all instructed in the way of God and in the knowledge of Him and remained for no short time in his natural simplicity and in the heat of vice; but he was changed by the right hand of the Highest and justified from sin, and by the grace and power of the Most High was filled with Divine wisdom above all who were found in his own time. For whereas the Gospel teaching had everywhere proved to a great extent ineffectual generally (though not in particular instances), this man was sent by God in order that after the Apostles' example he might bear witness to the truth throughout the whole world. And so it came to pass that his teaching showed most plainly that all the wisdom of the world is foolish; and turned it in a short time, under the guidance of Christ, by the foolishness of preaching to the true wisdom of God. For in this latest time this new evangelist, like one of the rivers of Paradise, diffused the streams of the Gospel over all the earth with tender watering, and preached in deed the way of the Son of God, and the teaching of the Truth. Through him accordingly unlooked-for gladness and holy renovation filled the world, and a shoot of ancient religion brought a sudden reviving to long-standing decrepitude. A new spirit was given in the hearts of the elect, and saving unction was poured forth among them when, like one of the luminaries of heaven, Christ's servant and Saint shone from on high with a

new rite and new prodigies. Through him the ancient miracles were renewed, while in the wilderness of this world there was planted by a new method but after ancient custom a fruitful vine bearing sweet flowers, fragrant with holy virtues and stretching out everywhere the tendrils of a hallowed Religion.

90. Now though he was "a man of like passions with ourselves," he was not content to observe the common precepts, but overflowing with most fervent charity he took the way of entire perfection; he laid hold on the sum of perfect holiness, and saw every end fully attained. And so every order, age and sex finds in him plain instructions of salutary teaching and finds also eminent examples of holy works. If there be any who purpose to set their hand to arduous deeds and strive in emulation after the better unctions of the more excellent way, let them look into the mirror of his life and they shall learn all perfection. If any again fearing the steep climb to the top of the mountain betake them to a lowlier and easier course, they shall find, even at this level, fitting admonitions with him. And finally if any seek for signs and miracles let them interrogate his holiness and they shall get what they demand. And indeed the glorious life of this man sheds a clearer light on the perfection of earlier saints; the Passion of Jesus Christ proves this and His Cross makes it most fully manifest. Verily our venerable father was signed in five parts of his body with the token of the Cross and Passion, as if he had hung on the Cross with the Son of God. This sacrament is a great thing and makes known the majesty of love's prerogative; but therein a secret

counsel lies hid, and a reverend mystery is covered which we believe to be known to God only and to have been in part disclosed by the Saint himself to a certain person.[1] Wherefore it is not expedient to attempt much in praise of him whose praise is from Him who is the Praise, the Source, the Honour of all, the Most Mighty, giving rewards of light. Let us therefore return to our history, blessing the holy, true and glorious God.

CHAPTER II

Of blessed Francis' greatest desire; and how in the opening of a book he understood the Lord's will concerning him

91. AT a certain time the blessed and venerable father Francis, forsaking the crowds of lay-folk who were daily flocking together with the utmost devotion to see and hear him, went to a secret place of rest and solitude, desiring there to wait on God, and to wipe off any dust that might have stuck to him in his intercourse with men. His custom was to apportion the time allotted to him for the earning of grace, and, as he saw fit, to devote one part of it to the profit of his neighbour, and to spend the other in the blessed retirement of contemplation. He took with him therefore a very few companions, to whom his holy conversation was better known than to the rest, that they might protect him from being disturbed by the incursions of men, and might in all things respect and guard his repose. And after he had re-

[1] See below, II., 203.

mained some while there and by continual prayer and frequent contemplation had in an unspeakable manner attained to intimacy with God, he longed to know what was or might be most acceptable to the Eternal King in and concerning himself. Most carefully did he search out and most tenderly did he long to know in what manner, by what way or by what desire he might most perfectly cleave to the Lord God, in accordance with the counsel and good pleasure of His will. This was ever his highest philosophy; with this supreme desire he ever burned so long as he lived: to seek out from simple and wise, from perfect and imperfect, how he might apprehend the way of truth and accomplish the highest purpose. (92) For whereas he was the most perfect of the perfect he disclaimed perfection and deemed himself altogether imperfect. For he had tasted and seen how sweet, how pleasing, how good the God of Israel is to those who are upright of heart and seek Him in pure simplicity and true purity; and the sweetness and delight instilled—such sweetness and delight as are most rarely vouchsafed to the rarest men—which he had felt wafted to him from on high, compelled him wholly to stand aloof from himself; and being filled with such rapture he longed by all means to pass over wholly thither where, leaving himself, he had already in part gone before. The man was ready (having the Spirit of God) to suffer every distress of mind and to endure every bodily suffering if his wish might at length be granted, namely, that his heavenly Father's will should mercifully be accomplished in him. One day therefore he came before the sacred

altar that had been erected in the hermitage where he abode, took a volume wherein the sacred Gospels were written and reverently placed it on the altar. Then prostrate in prayer to God (not less in heart than in body) he asked with humble supplication that the gracious God, "the father of mercies and God of all comfort," would be pleased to show him His will. And that he might have strength perfectly to accomplish that which in simplicity and devotion he had begun long before, he humbly prayed that on his first opening of the book it might be pointed out what would be fittest for him to do. (For he was being guided by the spirit of holy and most perfect men, of whom we read that they did something of the like nature with pious devotion in their longing for holiness.) (93) Then, rising from prayer, with contrite heart and in the spirit of humility, and fortifying himself with the sign of the holy cross, he took the book from the altar and opened it with reverence and awe. And it came to pass that when he had opened the book the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ first met his eye, and therein alone the passage announcing that He would suffer tribulation. But to avoid any suspicion that this might have happened by chance, he opened the book a second and a third time and found the same or a similar passage written. Then the man, full of the Spirit of God, understood that it behoved him through much anguish and much warfare to enter into the Kingdŏm of God. But the valiant knight is not dismayed at wars that are bursting upon him, nor is he shaken in mind who is about to fight the Lord's battles in the camp of

this world. The man who had toiled long beyond the measure of human strength without yielding even to himself had no fear of falling before the foe. Truly he was most fervent, and if he had in the past ages a companion in purpose, no one was ever found superior to him in desire. It was even easier for him to work perfection than to talk about it, for he always applied himself with effectual zeal and effort not to words (which are not constituents of good, but evidences of it) but to holy deeds. And so he stood unshaken and glad and sang songs of gladness in his heart to himself and to God. Therefore he was held worthy of a greater revelation who thus rejoiced over a lesser; and "he that is faithful in little is set over many things".

CHAPTER III

Of the vision of a man having the likeness of a seraph crucified

94. WHILE he dwelt in the hermitage which, from the place in which it is situate, is called Alverna, two years before he gave back his soul to Heaven, he saw in a vision of God a man like a seraph having six wings, standing over him with hands outstretched and feet joined together, fixed to a cross. Two wings were raised above his head, two were spread out for flight, and two veiled the whole body. Now, when the blessed servant of the Most High saw this, he was filled with exceeding great wonder, but he could not understand what this vision might mean.

Yet he rejoiced greatly and was filled with vehement delight at the benign and gracious look wherewith he saw that he was regarded by the seraph, whose beauty far exceeded all estimation; but the crucifixion, and the bitterness of the seraph's suffering smote him altogether with fear. Thus he arose, so to speak, sorrowful and glad; and joy and grief alternated in him. He anxiously pondered what this vision might portend, and his spirit laboured sore to come at the understanding of it. And while he continued without any clear perception of its meaning, and the strangeness of the vision was perplexing his heart, marks of nails began to appear in his hands and feet, such as he had seen a little while before in the Man crucified who had stood over him.

95. His hands and feet seemed pierced in the midst by nails, the heads of the nails appearing in the inner part of the hands and in the upper part of the feet, and their points over against them. Now those marks were round in the inner side of the hands and elongated on the outer side, and certain small pieces of flesh were seen like the ends of nails bent and driven back, projecting from the rest of the flesh. So also the marks of nails were imprinted in his feet, and raised above the rest of the flesh. Moreover his right side, as it had been pierced by a lance, was overlaid with a scar, and often shed forth blood, so that his tunic and drawers were many times sprinkled with the sacred blood. Alas! how few were found worthy to see the sacred wound in his side while the crucified servant of the crucified Lord was yet alive! But happy was Elias who was found worthy to see it somehow while the

Saint was living;[1] and not less happy Rufino who touched it with his own hands. For once, when brother Rufino had put his hand into the most holy man's bosom that he might scratch him, his hand (as it often chances) slipped down to Francis' right side, and he happened to touch that precious scar, at which touch the Saint of God was not a little distressed, and, pushing the hand away, he cried to the Lord that He might forgive him (Rufino). For he concealed the stigmata most diligently from strangers, and from those about him he hid them so carefully that even the brethren at his side and his most devoted followers were for a long time unaware of them. (96) And though the servant and friend of the Most High saw himself adorned with such and so many of these pearls (as with most precious jewels), and distinguished in wondrous fashion beyond the glory and honour of all men, he was not vain in his heart, nor did he seek to gratify [the curiosity] of any concerning this matter from lust of vainglory, but, that man's favour might not rob him of the grace bestowed on him he exerted himself in every way he could to hide it. For his custom was to reveal his chiefest secret to few or none; fearing that if he revealed it to any, these persons treating his confidence as a mark of special affection would disclose it to others (as favourites are wont to do,) and that thereby he would suffer some loss in the grace that had been given him. Accordingly he ever had in his heart and often on his lips that saying of the Prophet, "I have hidden Thy words in my heart that I should not sin against Thee".

[1] See below, II., 138.

And whenever any lay-people came to him and he wished to abstain from talking with them, he had given this token to the brethren and sons who abode with him that when he should recite the aforesaid verse they were at once with all courtesy to dismiss the visitors. For he had found by experience that it is a very evil thing to impart all things to everybody, and he knew that no one can be spiritual whose secret perfections are not more and greater than those which appear outwardly and may in consequence of that appearance give rise to different judgments among men. For he had found some who agreed with him outwardly and disagreed with him inwardly, applauding him to his face and mocking him behind his back; who got credit for themselves and made him somewhat mistrustful of the upright. For wickedness often strives to blacken purity; and by reason of the falsehood which is familiar to the many the truth spoken by the few is not believed.

CHAPTER IV

Of blessed Francis' fervour: and of the infirmity of his eyes

97. DURING this same period his body began to be oppressed with various sicknesses, more grievous than before: for he suffered frequent infirmities, being one who during many years past had perfectly chastised his body and brought it into subjection. For, for the space of eighteen years, then fulfilled, his flesh had had little or no rest, travelling through many and very extensive regions that the ready, de-

voted, fervent spirit which dwelt within might scatter everywhere the seeds of God's word. He filled all the earth with Christ's Gospel, so that often in one day he would make the circuit of four or five villages or even towns preaching to every one the Gospel of the Kingdom of God: and, edifying his hearers not less by his example than by his words, he had made a tongue of his whole body. For in him the flesh was so much in concord with the spirit and so obedient to it that whilst the spirit was striving to compass all sanctity, the flesh not only did not resist but was forward to anticipate according as it is written, "My soul hath thirsted for Thee, in what manifold wise my flesh also!" For persistence in subjection had made it voluntary; and it was by the daily bending down of himself that he had attained so high a position in virtue: for custom often becomes nature. (98) But since as according to Nature's laws and the manner of man's condition, the outward man must needs perish from day to day (though the inward be renewed) that most precious vessel wherein was hidden a heavenly treasure, began on all sides to be shattered and to suffer the loss of all its strength. But forasmuch as "when a man is completed then he shall begin, and when he shall end then he shall work,"[1] amid the weakness of the flesh, his spirit became even more active than before. So earnestly was his affection set on the salvation of souls, and such was his thirst for his neighbour's advantage, that though he could no longer walk he went round the country riding on an ass. The brethren

[1] Ecclus. xviii. 6.

often warned him with the most urgent entreaties that he should in some sort restore his sick and greatly enfeebled body by the aid of physicians. But he, with that noble spirit of his fixed on heaven, and longing only to be dissolved and to be with Christ, altogether refused to do it. Then, for that he had not yet fulfilled those sufferings of Christ which were still lacking in his flesh, even though he bore Christ's stigmata in his body, there came upon him a grievous infirmity of the eyes, according as God multiplied His mercy on him. And as that infirmity increased from day to day and seemed daily to be aggravated by neglect, at length, brother Elias, whom he had chosen for himself in place of a mother, and had made the father of the other brethren, urged him not to shrink from medicine, but to receive it in the name of the Son of God by whom it had been created, even as it is written: "The Most High hath created medicine out of the earth, and the wise man will not shrink from it". Then the holy father acquiesced, and humbly complied with the words of his admonisher.

CHAPTER V

How he was received at Rieti by the Lord Hugo, Bishop of Ostia; and how the Saint proclaimed that that bishop would be bishop of all the world

99. NOW it came to pass that when many were coming to help him with their medicines without any remedy being found, he went to the city of Rieti where dwelt a man said to be very skilful in the cure of that disease. And when he got there he

was most kindly and honourably received by the whole Roman Court which was then residing in that same city, but with especial devotion by the Lord Hugo, Bishop of Ostia, who far outshone the rest in virtuous behaviour and holiness of life. By the will and consent of the Lord Pope Honorius Blessed Francis had chosen this man as father and lord over the whole Religion and Order of his brethren because blessed Poverty was very pleasing to him and he held holy Simplicity in the greatest reverence. That lord conformed himself to the behaviour of the brethren, and in his longing for holiness was simple with the simple, humble with the humble and a poor man with the poor. He was a Brother among the Brethren, among the Lesser Least, and strove so far as might be to bear himself in life and conduct just like one of the rest. He was watchful to plant the holy Religion everywhere, and the illustrious report of his still more illustrious life greatly enlarged the Order in distant parts. The Lord gave him a learned tongue whereby he confounded the adversaries of the truth, refuted the enemies of the Cross of Christ, brought back wanderers to the way, made peace between those who were in discord, and bound together those who were in concord by a stronger bond of charity. He was a "burning and a shining lamp" in the Church of God and a "chosen arrow"[1] prepared in due season. (100) O how often would he put off his costly garments, and arrayed in mean ones, going barefoot like one of the brethren, would he entreat for the things that make

[1] John v. 35; Isa. xlix. 2.

for peace! And this he was careful to do between a man and his neighbour as often as was meet; between God and man, always. Wherefore God chose him not long after to be Pastor in His holy Church Universal and "lifted up his head among the tribes of the people". And that it may be known that this election was inspired by God and effected by the will of Christ Jesus, the blessed father Francis long before predicted it by words and marked it by a sign. For when by the operation of God's grace the Order and Religion of the brethren was beginning to be much enlarged and, like a cedar in the Paradise of God, was lifting its top (that is, its holy merit) to heaven, and even as a choice vine was stretching its sacred branches over the breadth of the earth, S. Francis came to the Lord Pope Honorius who was then set over the Church of Rome and humbly begged him to appoint the Lord Hugo, Bishop of Ostia, father and lord of him and his brethren. The Lord Pope granted the Saint's prayer and in gracious compliance therewith made over to the bishop his own authority over the Order of the Brethren, which the bishop received with reverence and devotion, and, like a faithful and wise servant set over the Lord's household he strove by all means to minister the food of eternal life in due season to those committed to his charge. Wherefore the holy father submitted himself to him in all ways and revered him with wondrous and respectful affection. He was led by the Spirit of God wherewith he was filled and therefore beheld long before what was afterwards to be accomplished in the sight of all as he had foreseen it. For whenever he would write to the Bishop of Ostia, being urged by business of his

religious family, or rather constrained by the charity of Christ wherewith he burned towards him, he would by no means allow him in his letters to be called "Bishop of Ostia" or "of Velletri" according to the customary greeting employed by others, but after fixing on his subject he would begin "To the right reverend father (or lord) Hugo, bishop of the whole world". And often he would greet him with unheard-of blessings; and, though he were a son in devout submission, yet at the Spirit's prompting he would sometimes comfort him with fatherly intercourse, that he might "confirm upon him the blessings of the fathers, until the desire of the eternal hills should come".[1] (101) The said lord for his part burned with exceeding love toward the holy man and therefore whatever the blessed man said or did pleased him, and he was often deeply stirred by the mere sight of him. He himself bears witness that however disturbed or vexed he might be, on seeing S. Francis and talking with him all mental clouds were dispersed, serenity returned, melancholy was put to flight and joy breathed on him from above. He ministered to S. Francis as a servant to his lord; and as often as he saw him paid him reverence as to an apostle of Christ; and bowing down outwardly and inwardly would often kiss his hands with his consecrated mouth. He sought with watchful and devoted care how the blessed father might recover the former soundness of his eyes, knowing him to be a holy man and a just, and exceedingly necessary and profitable to the Church of God. He had compassion on the whole

[1] Gen. xlix. 26.

congregation of the brethren concerning him, and in the father pitied the sons. He warned the holy father therefore to take care of himself and not to cast away the things necessary for his infirmity, lest the neglect of these things should be accounted sinful rather than meritorious. And S. Francis humbly attended to what so reverend a lord and so dear a father told him, and thenceforth took the measures necessary for his cure with greater care and confidence. But meantime the disease had so much increased that for its healing in any degree it required the most skilled advice and demanded the most severe treatment. And so they cauterised his head in several places, cut open his veins, put on plasters and applied eye-washes, but he made no progress and was almost continuously getting worse.

CHAPTER VI

Of the behaviour of the brethren who waited on S. Francis; and how he was disposing himself to live

102. THESE things he bore for about two years in all patience and meekness, giving thanks in everything to God. But to the end that he might the more freely direct his intention to God, and in frequent ecstasy haunt the purlieus of the blissful mansions of heaven, and present himself on high in the richness of grace before the most gracious and serene Lord of all, he had entrusted the care of himself to certain brethren whom he loved much, and deservedly. Now these were men of virtue, devoted to God, pleasing to the Saints, acceptable to men, on whom (as a house on

four pillars) the blessed father Francis leaned. Their names I now suppress, to spare the shamefastness which is a very familiar friend to them, spiritual men as they are.[1] For shamefastness is the ornament of every age, the witness to innocence, the token of a modest mind, the rod of discipline, the special glory of the conscience, the guardian of reputation, and the badge of all seemliness. This virtue had adorned these brethren and made them lovable, and kind to men; but while this grace was common to all, each one was beautified by his own peculiar virtue. The first was of eminent discretion, the second of singular patience, the third of glorious simplicity, and the fourth was as gentle in disposition as he was powerful in bodily strength. And these with all watchfulness, with all zeal, and all their will strove to secure their blessed father's peace of mind, and cared for his bodily sickness shunning no distress nor toil that they might give themselves wholly to the Saint's service.

103. But though the glorious father was now complete in grace before God, and shone among the men of this world by his holy deeds, still he was ever thinking how he might set his hand to enterprises of greater perfection, and (like a skilled knight in God's camp) challenge the foe and kindle new wars. He purposed, under Christ his captain, to do great things, and even while his limbs were failing and his body as good as dead, he hoped to triumph over the foe in a fresh contest; for true virtue knows no limit of time, the expectation of the reward being eternal. Therefore he

[1] They were Leo, Angelo, Rufino and Masseo.

burned with a great desire to return to the beginnings of humility, and rejoicing in hope by reason of boundless love he thought to bring back his body—though now reduced to such extremity—to its former subjection. He was wholly cutting off every care that might be a hindrance to him and was completely hushing the din of all anxieties, and even while he was of necessity moderating the former rigour on account of his infirmity, he would say, "Let us begin, brethren, to serve the Lord God, for hitherto we have profited little or nothing". He counted not himself as yet to have apprehended, and remaining indefatigable in his purpose to attain new sanctity, ever hoped that he might make a beginning. He wished once more to return to the service of lepers, and to be held in contempt as he had once been. He purposed to fly from intercourse with men, and betake himself to the remotest places, that so, having put off all care and laid aside anxiety for others, the wall of the flesh (while he was still in the body) might alone separate him from God. (104) For he saw many running after offices of government whose temerity he hated, and whom he was striving to recall from such pestilence by his example. And he used to say that it was good and acceptable before God to have charge of others, and that those ought to undertake the care of souls who should seek naught therein of their own, but should always give heed to the will of God in all things—such men as should put nothing before their own salvation; should attend, not to the applause, but to the profit of those put under them, seeking not pomp in the sight of men, but glory before God; such men as should not strive after office, but

fear it; such men as should not be puffed up by it when they got it, but humbled, and when it was taken away from them should not be cast down, but exalted. But especially at that time, when wickedness had grown to such excess, and iniquity abounded, he pronounced that it was dangerous to rule and more profitable to be ruled. He grieved that some had "left their first works" and had forgotten their old simplicity in new inventions; and accordingly he lamented that they who were once intent with their whole desire on higher things had descended to things base and worthless, and had left the true joys to range and wander in frivolity and emptiness over the field of a vacuous liberty. Therefore he besought the Divine clemency for the deliverance of his children, and prayed most earnestly that they might be kept in the grace given them.

CHAPTER VII

How he came from Siena to Assisi: of the Church of Santa Maria in Portiuncula: and of the blessing of the brethren

105. NOW in the sixth month before the day of his death, while he was at Siena for the treatment of the infirmity of his eyes, he began grievously to sicken in all the rest of his body; and the stomach being weakened through long standing disease and the disordered state of the liver, he vomited much blood, so that he seemed to be drawing nigh to death. On hearing of this, brother Elias came to him from a distance with the utmost haste; and when he arrived the holy father recovered so much that he left Siena

and came with Elias to Cella di Cortona. He came there and remained there some time during which his belly, his legs and his feet swelled, and his stomach became more and more deranged so that he could scarcely take any food. Then he asked brother Elias that he would have him brought to Assisi. The good son did what the kind father wished, prepared all things and brought him to the longed-for place. The city rejoiced over the arrival of the blessed father, and the mouths of all the people praised God, for the whole multitude hoped that the holy man might soon die;[1] and this was the matter of their so great exultation. And so it came to pass by the will of God, namely, that his holy soul, when released from the body, passed to the Kingdom of Heaven from the place where, while still abiding in the flesh, the knowledge of heavenly things had been first vouchsafed to him, and the saving unction poured upon him. (106) For though he knew that the Kingdom of Heaven has been set up in every place on earth, and believed that in every place the Divine grace is bestowed on God's elect, he had found by experience that the "place" of the Church of S. Maria in Portiuncula was filled with more fruitful grace, and frequented by the visitation of heavenly spirits. Therefore he often used to say to the brethren: "See, my sons, that ye never desert this place. If you are driven out by one way, come back by another: for this place is truly holy, and the abode of God. Here, when we were few the Most High increased us; here He enlightened the hearts of His poor men by the light of His wisdom;

[1] In order that they might keep his remains. See below, I., 112.

here He kindled our wills by the fire of His love; here he who shall pray with devout heart shall have what he asks, and he who shall offend shall be more heavily punished. Wherefore, my sons, deem the place of God's habitation worthy of all honour, and there with all your heart, with the voice of exultation and praise, give thanks to God."

107. Meanwhile, as his sickness increased, all his bodily force failed, and being deprived of all strength, he could not move at all. And when one of the brethren asked him which he would rather bear, this sickness, so lingering and so long, or to undergo from an executioner any martyrdom, however terrible, his answer was: "That, my son, ever has been and is dearest, sweetest, and most acceptable to me which it most pleases the Lord my God to do in me and with me, to Whose will I ever desire to be found conformable and obedient in all things. But in exchange for any kind of martyrdom it would be more distressing to me to bear this sickness, were it but for three days; and I do not say this having regard to the reward, but only to the distress which the suffering causes." O martyr, and once again martyr, who with laughter and rejoicing most gladly bore that which to all was most bitter and grievous to behold!

Truly not one of his members was left free from extreme suffering, and as the natural heat was being gradually lost, he was daily drawing near the end. The doctors were amazed and the brethren wondered how the spirit could live in flesh so dead, when the skin alone (the flesh having perished) stuck to the bones.

108. Now when he saw that his last day was at

hand (which had also been indicated to him two years before by Divine revelation), he called to him the brethren whom he would, and, as it was given him from above he blessed each one even as of old the patriarch Jacob blessed his sons, nay rather like a second Moses about to go up to the mountain which God had appointed him, he enlarged the children of Israel with blessings. And as brother Elias was sitting on his left hand and his other sons were sitting around, he crossed his hands, laid his right hand on Elias' head and said (he being deprived of the light and use of his outward eyes), "On whom am I holding my right hand?" "On brother Elias," was the answer. "And that is my wish," said he, adding: "I bless thee, my son, in and through all things, and as the Most High hath in thy hands increased my brethren and sons, so also, over thee and in thee do I bless them all. God, the King of all, bless thee in heaven and in earth. I bless thee as I can, and more than I can, and what I cannot may He who can do all things do in thee. God remember thy work and toil, and may a share be reserved for thee in the recompense of the just. Mayest thou find every blessing thou desirest, and may that which thou dost worthily ask be fulfilled. Fare ye well all ye my sons in the fear of God and remain in Him always, for a great trial is coming upon you and tribulation draweth nigh. Happy are they who shall persevere in the things they have begun, for the scandals that are to be shall separate some from them.[1] But I am hastening to the Lord, and am now

[1] See below, II., 216.

confidently going to my God, whom in my spirit I have served with devotion." He was at that time dwelling in the palace of the Bishop of Assisi; and therefore he asked the brethren to carry him with all speed to the "place" of S. Maria de Portiuncula; for he wished to give back his soul to God there, where (as has been said) he first knew the way of the truth perfectly.

CHAPTER VIII

What he did and said at the time of his happy decease

109. THE space of twenty years since his conversion was now accomplished, according to that which had been made known to him by the Divine will: for at a certain time when the blessed father and brother Elias were dwelling at Foligno, one night when they were asleep a certain priest clothed in white, of very great age and venerable appearance, stood by brother Elias and said: "Arise, brother, and tell brother Francis that eighteen years are fulfilled since he renounced the world and clave to Christ, that he shall remain in this life for two years only from this time and then the Lord will call him to Himself and he shall enter on the way of all flesh". And so it came to pass that the word of the Lord long foretold was fulfilled at the appointed time.

So after he had rested for a few days in the place he had so greatly longed for, and knew that the time of death was imminent, he called to him two brethren, and his specially loved sons and bade them in exulta-

tion of spirit sing with a loud voice praises to the Lord concerning death which was near, or rather life which was so close at hand; while himself, as he was able, broke into that Psalm of David, "I cried unto the Lord with my voice, with my voice unto the Lord I made supplication". But a certain brother among the company whom the Saint loved with very great affection and who was in great anxiety on behalf of all the brethren said to him when he saw these things and knew that his end was approaching, "Ah, kind father! thy children remain fatherless now, and are being bereft of the true light of their eyes! Remember then the orphans thou art leaving, forgive them all their faults and rejoice them all both present and absent with thy holy blessing!" "See, my son," answered the Saint, "God is calling me, I remit all the offences and faults of my brethren as well absent as present, and so far as I may, I absolve them: do thou proclaim this to them and bless them all for me."

110. Finally he ordered the codex of the Gospels to be brought and asked to have the passage from the Gospel according to John read to him beginning at the words "Six days (*sic*) before the Passover, Jesus, knowing that His hour was come, that He should pass out of this world unto the Father". Now the attendant had purposed to read this Gospel to him before he was bidden to do so, and furthermore the book opened first at that place, though the volume[1] out of which that Gospel had to be read was filled throughout with writing.

[1] *Bibliotheca, i.e.*, the volume of the Holy Scriptures.

Then, for that he was about to become dust and ashes, he bade that he should be laid on sack-cloth and sprinkled with ashes. All the brethren (whose father and leader he was) came together, and, as they stood reverently by and awaited his blessed departure and happy consummation, his most holy soul was released from the flesh and absorbed into the abyss of light, and his body fell asleep in the Lord. But one of his brethren and disciples, a man of no small fame, whose name I think it right to suppress now because while he lives in the flesh he chooses not to glory in such an announcement, saw the soul of the most holy father ascending over many waters in a straight course to heaven: and his soul was as it were a star having in some sort the bigness of the moon and possessing somewhat of the brightness of the sun, and borne up by a little white cloud. (111) Wherefore it pleases me to cry out thus concerning him: "O how glorious is this Saint whose soul a disciple saw ascending into heaven: 'fair as the moon, precious as the sun,'[1] most gloriously did he glow as he ascended on a white cloud! O thou true lamp of the world, shining in Christ's Church more brightly than the sun, lo! now thou hast withdrawn the beams of thy light, and, departing to that shining country, hast exchanged the company of us miserable beings for that of angels and saints! O glorious nursing-father of singular renown, put not off from thee the care of thy children though thou have now put off flesh like unto theirs! Thou knowest, yea thou knowest, in what great straits thou hast left those

[1] Canticles vi. 9.

whose countless toils and frequent distresses thy happy presence alone did at all times tenderly relieve ! O most holy father, truly merciful, who wast ever ready in kindness to have mercy on thy sinful children and to forgive them ! Thee therefore we bless, worthy father whom the Most High did bless Who is for ever God blessed above all. Amen."

CHAPTER IX

Of the brethren's lamentation and of their joy when they beheld him bearing the signs of the Cross : and of the Seraph's wings

112. MANY people therefore flocked together praising God and saying : "Praised and blessed be thou, O Lord our God, who hast entrusted to us, unworthy as we are, so precious a deposit : praise and glory be to Thee, ineffable Trinity." The whole city of Assisi rushed in throngs, and all that region made haste to see the great things of God which the Lord of Majesty had gloriously shown in His holy servant. Each one, as his heart's joy prompted him, sang an hymn of gladness, and all blessed the Saviour's omnipotence for the fulfilment of their desire. But the sons, bereft of such a father, lamented and showed the dutiful affection of their hearts by tears and sighs. But an unheard-of joy tempered their sadness, and the novelty of a miracle turned their minds to exceeding amazement. Grief was converted into singing and weeping into jubilation. For never had they heard or read in Scriptures of a thing which was now displayed before their eyes ; and indeed they could scarce have

been persuaded of it had it not been proved by testimony so manifest. There appeared in him in fact the form of the Cross and Passion of the spotless Lamb Who washed away the sins of the world, while he seemed as though lately taken down from the Cross, having his hands and feet pierced by nails, and his right side as though wounded by a lance. And they beheld his flesh which had been dark before glittering with exceeding whiteness and promising by its beauty the reward of a blessed resurrection. Finally they saw his face like the face of an angel, as if he were alive and not dead, while his other members had become soft and pliant like those of an innocent child. (113) His sinews were not contracted as those of the dead are wont to be, his skin was not hardened, his limbs were not stiffened, but turned this way and that as they were placed. And while he shone with such wondrous beauty in the sight of all, and his flesh had become still more radiant, it was wonderful to see amid his hands and feet not the prints of the nails but the nails themselves formed out of his flesh and retaining the blackness of iron, and his right side reddened with blood. The signs of martyrdom did not fill the minds of the beholders with horror but added much comeliness and grace, even as little black stones in a white pavement are wont to do. His brethren and sons hastened to the sight and wept together as they kissed the hands and feet of the tender father who was leaving them, and his right side also in whose wound a solemn memorial was enacting of Him who, shedding forth blood and water together from that same part, reconciled the world to the Father. Any one

among the people who was admitted, not to kiss but only to see the sacred stigmata of Jesus Christ which S. Francis bore in his body deemed that the greatest of gifts was bestowed upon him. For who at that sight would give himself over to weeping and not rather to joy? and if he wept would not weep for joy rather than from grief? Whose breast so hard but it would be moved to groaning? Whose heart so stony but it would be cleft by compunction, kindled to Divine love, armed with a good will? Who so dull, so insensible as not to perceive in manifest truth that as that Saint was honoured by so unparalleled a gift on earth so he is magnified by glory unspeakable in heaven?

114. O unparalleled gift, and token of a prerogative of love, that a knight should be decked with the same glorious arms that befit the King alone in their surpassing dignity! O miracle worthy of eternal memory, O memorable sacrament worthy of ceaseless awe and wonder, which by seeing faith[1] represents that mystery wherein the blood of the spotless Lamb streaming plenteously through five outlets has washed away the sins of the world! O sublime splendour of the life-giving Cross which quickens the dead, whose burden presses so gently and causes so sweet a smart that in it the dead flesh lives and the feeble spirit is strengthened! He loved thee much, whom thou didst so gloriously adorn! Glory and blessing be to the only wise God who reneweth signs and changeth wonders that He may comfort the minds of the weak by new re-

[1] *Oculata fide.* Al. *occulta, occultata* (hidden faith).

velations and that by a wonderful work in the region of the visible their hearts may be caught up into love of the invisible! O wondrous and lovable contrivance of God whereby (that no suspicion might arise concerning the newness of the miracle) He in His mercy first displayed in a celestial being that which ere long He was about to do in one dwelling on earth! And indeed the true Father of mercies willed to make known of how great a reward he is worthy who shall strive to love Him with all his heart—a station namely in the highest rank of super-celestial spirits and the nearest to Himself. And this reward we can undoubtedly attain if like the Seraph we extend two wings above our head, that is to say, if (after blessed Francis' example) in every good work our intention be pure and our action upright, and if we direct these toward God and strive with tireless zeal to please Him in everything. Now the wings must needs be joined together for the veiling of the head, because the Father of lights will by no means accept uprightness of action without purity of intention, nor yet the converse, as He Himself saith: "If thine eye is single thy whole body shall be bright, but if it is evil thy whole body shall be dark." For that is not a single eye which sees not what it should see for lack of knowledge of the truth, nor yet that which not having a pure intention looks on what it ought not.

Plain reason will judge that in the first case the eye is not single, but blind; and that in the second, the eye is evil. The feathers of these wings are the love of the Father who saves in mercy, and the fear of the Lord, the terrible Judge: which feathers should keep the souls of the elect raised up above earthly things by

checking bad impulses and ordering the affections in chastity.

With two wings also we should fly to bestow double charity on our neighbour, namely by refreshing his soul with God's word and sustaining his body with earthly succour. But these wings are most rarely joined together because hardly any one is able to fulfil both these duties. The feathers of these wings are the different acts necessary to be done for giving advice and help to our neighbour.

Lastly, with two wings the body, which is bare of merits, should be covered; and this is orderly performed when, so often as it has been stript by the intervention of sin, it is again clothed with innocence through contrition and confession. The feathers of these wings are the manifold affections begotten by execration of sin and hunger after righteousness.

115. All these things were most perfectly performed by the most blessed father Francis who bore the image and form of a seraph and by continuing on the Cross was found worthy to rise to the rank of the spirits on high. For he was ever on the Cross, shrinking from no toil and pain if only he might accomplish the Lord's will in himself and concerning himself. The brethren, moreover, who lived with him knew how continually every day his talk was of Jesus, how sweet and tender was his discourse, how benign and full of love his conversation. Out of the abundance of the heart his mouth spoke, and the spring of enlightened love which filled him inwardly through and through bubbled forth outwardly. Verily, he was much with Jesus; ever did he bear Jesus in his heart, Jesus in his mouth, Jesus in his

ears, Jesus in his eyes, Jesus in his hands, Jesus in his other members. Oh, how often, when sitting at table, if he heard or named or thought of Jesus, did he forget the bodily food, and as we read concerning the Saint: "Seeing, he saw not; and hearing, heard not". Nay, more, many a time, as he was walking on his way meditating and singing of Jesus, did he forget whither he was going, and invite all the elements to praise Jesus. And because with wondrous love he ever bore and preserved in his heart Christ Jesus and Him crucified, therefore he was signed in most glorious wise above all other men with the sign of Him whom in rapture of mind he even contemplated in glory unspeakable and incomprehensible, sitting at the right hand of the Father with whom He, the Most High, coequal Son of the Most High, in the unity of the Holy Ghost liveth and reigneth, overcometh and governeth, God eternally glorious throughout all ages. Amen.

CHAPTER X

Of the wailing of the ladies at S. Damian; and how S. Francis was buried with praise and glory

116. HIS brethren therefore and sons who had come together with all the multitude of people from the neighbouring towns, rejoicing to be present at such a solemnity, spent the whole night on which the holy father died in praising God, so that for the sweetness of the songs of joy and the brightness of the lights it seemed to be a vigil of angels. And in the morning the people of Assisi with the whole of the

clergy assembled, and took the sacred body from the place where he had died and brought it with honour into the city with hymns and praises and blare of trumpets. All carried boughs of olive and other trees, performing the sacred obsequies with solemnity; and with many lights and with loud-sounding voices they discharged the duty of praise. And when, as the sons bore their father and the flock followed their shepherd hastening to the Shepherd of all, they reached the place where he himself had planted the Religion and Order of Sacred Virgins and Poor Ladies, and laid him in the church of S. Damian, wherein his said daughters dwelt whom he had won to the Lord, a little window was opened through which the Handmaids of Christ are wont at the appointed time to partake of the Sacrament of the Lord's Body. The coffin also was opened wherein lay hid a treasure of super-celestial virtues, wherein he was being borne by few who was wont to bear many. And lo! the Lady Clara, who was indeed illustrious (*clara*) through her holy merits and was the mother of the rest and the first plant of this holy Order, came with her daughters to look upon the father that spake not to them, and would not return to them, for he was hastening elsewhither. (117) And as they looked upon him with repeated sighs, with deep groaning and with many tears, they began to cry with choked voices: "Father, father, what shall we do? Why forsakest thou us in our misery, or to whom dost thou leave us in our desolation? Why didst thou not send us before rejoicing to the place whither thou art going—us whom thou leavest thus grieving here? What dost thou bid us to do, shut up thus in

this prison—us whom thou art determined nevermore to visit as thou wast wont to do? With thee all our consolation departs and no such solace is left to us, buried in the world! Who shall comfort us in such poverty—poverty not less of merit than of [temporal] things? O father of the poor! lover of Poverty! who shall succour us in temptation, O thou who hast known countless temptations, thou cautious trier of temptations? Who shall comfort us troubled ones in our tribulation, thou our helper in exceeding great tribulations which came upon us? O most bitter separation, O disastrous forsaking! O Death too dreadful who art slaughtering thousands of sons and daughters bereft of such a father while thou hastenest to remove past recall him through whom any zealous efforts of ours have chiefly prospered!"

But virginal bashfulness restrained their much weeping: and indeed it was very incongruous to wail for one over whose passing hence the angel army hovered in throngs, while the fellow-citizens of the Saints and they of God's household rejoiced. And so those Ladies, divided between sorrow and joy, kissed his radiant hands adorned with most precious gems and flashing with pearls:[1] and when he was taken away the door was shut which shall nevermore be opened to such woe.

O what was the grief of all over the woeful and piteous wailing of these Ladies! How great especially were the lamentations of the sorrowing sons! And their peculiar grief was shared by all, so that scarce

[1] See above, I., 96.

any one could refrain from weeping while the angels of peace were bitterly weeping.

118. At length when all the multitude had reached the city they laid the most holy body with great rejoicing and exultation in a hallowed place—thenceforward still more hallowed—where to the glory of the Supreme Almighty God he illumines the world by a multiplication of new miracles, even as he has wonderfully enlightened it hitherto by the doctrine of his holy preaching. Thanks be to God. Amen.

See, most holy and blessed father, I have accompanied thee with praises due and worthy though insufficient, and have written a narrative, such as it is, of thy exploits. Grant therefore to me a miserable man so worthily to follow thee now that in mercy I may deserve to overtake thee hereafter. Remember, O tender father, the poor sons, to whom, after thee their one and only solace, scarce any comfort is left. For though thou, the first and best portion of them, be mingled with choirs of angels, and placed among the Apostles on a throne of glory, they nevertheless are lying in mire and dirt, shut up in a dark prison, and crying mournfully to thee thus: "Present, father, before Jesus Christ, the Son of the Supreme Father, his sacred wounds, and show forth the tokens of the Cross in side, feet and hands, that He may deign in mercy to display His own wounds to the Father, Who for this will indeed ever be favourable to us in our misery. Amen."

PART III

HERE BEGINS THE THIRD PART, CONCERNING THE CANONIZATION OF OUR BLESSED FATHER FRANCIS, AND CONCERNING HIS MIRACLES

119. So our most glorious father Francis in the twentieth year of his conversion, connecting a happy beginning with a still happier end, most happily commended his spirit to heaven where, "crowned with glory and honour" and having obtained a place "amid fiery stones" [1] he stands before the throne of the Godhead and applies himself effectually to further the concerns of those whom he has left on earth. What indeed may be denied to him in the imprint of whose sacred stigmata appears the form of Him "who being coequal with the Father sitteth at the right hand of the Majesty on high, the brightness of God's glory and the figure of His substance," making atonement for sins? Should not he be heard who having been "conformed unto the death of Christ Jesus in the fellowship of His sufferings," shows forth the sacred wounds in hands, feet and side? Verily he is already gladdening the whole world, saved by the new joy, and offering to all the advantage of true salvation. By the bright light of miracles he shines on the world and illumines the whole earth with the lustre of a true star. At first the world, robbed of his presence, mourned, and at his setting saw itself overwhelmed as it were in a pit of darkness. But now, in the rising of this new light,

[1] See Ezek. xxviii. 14.

being lit up as at noon with brighter beams, it feels that the universal darkness has departed. All its lamentation, blessed God, has ceased now that everywhere and every day with new exultation plenteous sheaves of holy virtues are being heaped upon it through him. From east and west, from south and north come those who have been succoured through his advocacy and are proving by truthful witness that these things are so. And indeed while he lived in the flesh that chiefest lover of the things above took nothing in the way of property on earth, to the end that he might the more fully and joyfully possess the universal good: and so he who refused the part acquired the whole, and exchanged time for eternity. Everywhere he is helping all, everywhere he is at hand for all, and, truly a lover of the Unity, knows not the losses of participation. (120) Still living among sinners he is travelling and preaching through the world: reigning now with the angels on high he flies swifter than thought as a messenger of the Supreme King and bestows glorious benefits on all peoples. Therefore the whole body of the peoples honours, reveres, glorifies and praises him. All in fact are sharers in the common good. Who may tell the number and nature of the miracles which the Lord is everywhere deigning to work through him? How many miracles in truth is Francis performing in France alone where the king and queen and all the magnates ran to kiss and worship the bolster which S. Francis had used in his sickness? Where also the wise and most learned men in the world (of whom as is her wont Paris produces a greater abundance than any other place) are humbly

and most devoutly revering, admiring and honouring Francis, the unlettered man and the true friend of simplicity and of all sincerity? And truly he was *Francis*, for above all men he bore a *frank* and noble heart. They who have experienced his greatness of spirit know how free, how liberal he was in all things, how confident and fearless; with what power, with what fervour of soul he trampled on all worldly things. And what shall I say of other parts of the world where by means of parts of his girdle diseases depart, sicknesses fly away, and crowds of both sexes are delivered from their plagues by merely calling on his name? (121) At his tomb, moreover, fresh miracles are constantly performing, and, in answer to multiplied intercessions, signal benefits to souls and bodies are granted at that place. Sight is restored to the blind, hearing to the deaf, the lame walk, the dumb speak, the gouty leap, the leper is cleansed, the swollen are reduced in bulk, and those oppressed by divers infirmities obtain their wished-for health, in such wise that the dead body heals living bodies, even as the living body raised up dead souls.

The Roman Pontiff, the highest of all pontiffs, the leader of Christians, the lord of the world, the shepherd of the Church, the Anointed of the Lord, the Vicar of Christ, heard and understood these things. He rejoiced and exulted, he was in transports of gladness when he beheld the renewal of the Church of God in his own times by new mysteries but by ancient wonders, and that in the person of his own son whom he bore in his sacred womb, cherished in his bosom, suckled with the word, and nurtured with the food of salvation. The other

guardians of the Church heard it too, the shepherds of the flock, the defenders of the faith, the friends of the Bridegroom, they who are at his side, the hinges (*cardines*) of the world, the venerable Cardinals. They congratulated the Church, they rejoiced with the Pope, they glorified the Saviour, Who with supreme and ineffable wisdom, supreme and incomprehensible grace, supreme and inestimable goodness, chose the foolish and base things of the world that so He might draw the mighty to Himself. The whole world heard and applauded, and the universal monarchy in obedience to the Catholic Faith abounded in joy and overflowed with holy consolation.

122. But there came a sudden change, and meantime a fresh emergency arose in the world. Forthwith the pleasantness of peace was disturbed; the torch of envy blazed up; the Church was torn by intestinal war in her own household. The Romans, a fierce and seditious race of men, raged, as they are wont, against their neighbours, and rashly put forth their hand against holy things. The noble Pope Gregory strove to keep down the rising wickedness, to repress the fierceness, to moderate the violence; and, like a tower of strength, protected the Church of Christ. Many perils burst upon her; destruction increased; and in the rest of the world sinners lifted up their necks against God. What then did the Pope do? Estimating the future by his ripe experience, and weighing the present, he left the City to the rebels, that he might deliver and defend the world from rebellion. So he went to the city of Rieti where he was received with the honour due to him: and proceeding thence to Spoleto he was honoured with great respect by all. Here he remained for a few

days, and then, after taking order for the Church, paid a kind visit, accompanied by the venerable Cardinals, to the Handmaids of Christ, dead and buried to the world. The holy conversation and the deep poverty of these Ladies and their renowned way of life moved him and the others to tears, urged them to despise the world, and kindled them to embrace a life of retirement. O lovely Humility! nurse of all graces! The Prince of the world, the successor of the Prince of the Apostles, visits poor lowly women, comes to them in their seclusion, despised and humble as they are! An example of humility which though worthy of just approbation was unwonted, and had not been met with for many ages past.

123. And now he flies in haste to Assisi, where the glorious deposit is preserved for him, to the end that thereby the universal suffering and approaching tribulation may be driven away. At his entry the whole region is jubilant, the city is filled with exultation, a great crowd of people celebrate their joy, and the bright day is made still brighter by new luminaries. Every one came forth to meet him, and a solemn vigil was kept by all. The pious fellowship of the Poor Brethren came out to meet him, and each one sang sweet hymns to Christ the Lord. The Vicar of Christ arrived at the "place" and as he alighted, greeted S. Francis' sepulchre with eager reverence. He heaved many sighs, smote his breast, shed tears, and, in still more abundant devotion, bowed his reverend head. Meantime solemn conference was held touching the Saint's canonization, and the noble assembly of the Cardinals was often called together about this business. Many came together from all parts who had been delivered from

their plagues through God's Saint, and from every side there was a great blaze of miracles. These were listened to, received, verified, and approved.

Meantime pressing affairs, a fresh emergency, compelled the blessed Pope to go to Perugia, whence (a superabundant and unparalleled favour) he purposed to return to Assisi for the supreme business. Finally there was another meeting at Perugia, and the sacred assembly of the venerable Cardinals was held in the Lord Pope's chamber about this matter. All were unanimous, and said the same thing. They read the miracles with the utmost reverence, and extolled the blessed father's life and conversation with the loudest encomiums.

124. "No need," said they, "for miracles to attest the most holy man's most holy life, which we have seen with our eyes, handled with our hands and proved under the teaching of truth". They were all transported with joy, they were glad, they wept, and truly in those tears was much blessing. Forthwith they appointed the blessed day whereon they should fill all the world with saving joy.

The solemn day, to be held in reverence by every age, arrived shedding sublime rapture not only on earth but even in the purlieus of heaven. Bishops were called together, abbots arrived, and prelates of the Church from the remotest parts were there; royalty was present, and a noble multitude of counts and magnates assembled. They all escorted the lord of all the world and with him entered the city of Assisi with auspicious pomp. They reached the place prepared for the solemn event and the whole company of glorious Cardinals, bishops and abbots gathered round

the blessed Pope. An extraordinary concourse of priests and clerks was there, there was the happy and sacred company of Religious, there the more bashful habit of the sacred veil, there a mighty throng of all peoples and a well-nigh countless multitude of either sex. They ran together from every quarter, and every age with the utmost eagerness was represented in that great assembly. Small and great were there, slave and he who was free from his lord.

125. The Supreme Pontiff is there, the Bridegroom of Christ's Church, surrounded by such various offspring, with a crown of glory on his head in manifest token of sanctity. He is there adorned with a pontifical chasuble, and clad with the holy garments bound with gold and ornamented with the work of the carver in precious stones. The Lord's Anointed is there resplendent in glorious magnificence; covered with engraven jewels shining with the radiance of spring he invites the gaze of all. The Cardinals and bishops surround him; decked with splendid necklaces and flashing with garments white as snow they exhibit the image of super-celestial beauties and represent the joy of the glorified. The whole people await the voice of joy, the voice of gladness, the new voice, the voice full of all sweetness, the voice of praise, the voice of perpetual blessing. First of all Pope Gregory preached to all the people and with honey-sweet affection proclaimed God's praises with sonorous voice. Then he uttered a noble panegyric of father Francis, and as he recalled and rehearsed the purity of his life he was altogether bathed in tears. The text of his sermon was this: "As the morning star amid

vapour, as the moon in the days of her fulness, and as the sun in his brightness, so did he shine in the temple of God" (Ecclus. l. 6, 7). And when the discourse, faithful and worthy of all acceptance, was ended, one of the Lord Pope's sub-deacons, named Ottaviano, read out before all in a loud voice the miracles of the Saint: and Messer Riniero,[1] a cardinal deacon, a man of mighty and penetrating intellect, illustrious by his piety and character, discoursed of them with sacred utterance, bedewed with tears. The Shepherd of the Church was in a transport of emotion; and as he heaved heavy sighs from the depths of his being, and redoubled salutary sobs, he poured forth streams of tears. The other prelates of the Church also shed floods of tears, the abundance of which bedewed their sacred attire. Finally all the people wept, and in their longing expectation were greatly wearied by the suspense.

126. Then the blessed Pope cried with a loud voice and said, raising his hands to heaven: "To the praise and glory of Almighty God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and of the glorious Virgin Mary, and of the blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and to the honour of the glorious Church of Rome, by the counsel of our brethren and the other prelates we decree, revering on earth the most blessed father Francis whom the Lord hath glorified in heaven, that he be numbered in the roll of saints, and that his festival be kept on the day of his death". And on this, the reverend Cardinals with the Lord Pope

[1] Riniero Capocci, a friend of S. Dominic and a supporter of his Order.

began to chant with loud voice "*Te Deum Laudamus*". Then was raised a shout of many people praising God, the earth rang with the mighty sound, the air was filled with jubilations, and the ground was moistened with tears. New songs were sung, and God's servants rejoiced in melody of the spirit. Sweet-toned organs were heard, and spiritual songs were sung, by harmonious voices. Sweet perfume was there shed around, and jocund melody stirred the emotions of all. Brightly gleamed that day, which was tinted with more radiant beams. There the olive-boughs were green, and the other trees were decked in their fresh foliage: there all were adorned with festive attire of dazzling brightness and the blessing of peace rejoiced the minds of the throng. At length the happy Pope Gregory came down from his lofty throne, and by the steps beneath entered the sanctuary to offer vows and sacrifices, and with happy lips he kissed the tomb containing the body sacred and consecrated to God. He offered many prayers and celebrated the Sacred Mysteries. A crowd of brethren stood about him praising, worshipping and blessing Almighty God who has done great things in all lands. All the people magnified God's praises, and paid the due of holy thanksgiving to S. Francis in honour of the Trinity Most High. Amen. These things were done in the city of Assisi on 16th July, in the second year of the pontificate of Pope Gregory IX. [A.D. 1228.]

IN CHRIST'S NAME HERE BEGIN THE MIRACLES OF OUR MOST HOLY FATHER FRANCIS.

127. Humbly imploring the grace of our Lord Jesus

Christ, we will, in order to arouse and promote the devotion of the men of this time, and to strengthen the faith of those that are to come, set down briefly but truly, under the guidance of Christ, the miracles which (as has been said) were read before the Lord Pope Gregory, and proclaimed to the people.

Of the healing of the crooked

On the day that the hallowed and holy body of the most blessed father Francis was put away, like a most precious treasure, having been anointed rather with super-celestial aromas than with earthly spices, a girl was brought whose neck had for a year past been monstrously bent so that her head was joined to the shoulder, and she could only look up sideways. But after placing her head for some time under the coffin wherein the precious body of the Saint lay, forthwith she raised up her neck, through the most holy man's merits, and her head was restored to its proper position so that the girl was astounded at the sudden change in herself and began to run away, weeping excessively. Now in the shoulder to which her head had been fastened a pit was seen caused by the position which the long illness had brought about.

128. There was in the territory of Narni a boy whose leg was so bent back that he could only walk by the help of two sticks. He was a beggar, and after having been oppressed with this grievous infirmity for several years he did not know his own father and mother. But by the merits of our most blessed father Francis he was delivered from the said trial in such wise that he could go freely anywhere without the support of sticks, praising and blessing God and His Saint.

129. One Nicholas, a citizen of Foligno had his left leg drawn together, and, as he suffered excessive pain, he spent so much on doctors in order to recover his former health that he incurred debts against his will which were beyond his power to repay. At last, when their help had done him no good, and he was suffering such agony that his frequent screams prevented his neighbours from sleeping at night, he made vows to God and S. Francis and had himself carried to S. Francis' tomb; and, after passing a night before it in prayer, he stretched his leg out and joyfully returned without any stick to his own home.

130. Another boy with one leg so bent that the knee adhered to his breast and the heel to his buttocks came to the sepulchre of blessed Francis. His father was mortifying his own flesh with sackcloth and his mother sorely afflicting herself for his sake. Suddenly the boy recovered his health so perfectly that he was able to run about the streets sound and merry, giving thanks to God and S. Francis.

131. In the city of Fano there was a man so bent that his legs, which were full of ulcers, adhered to his buttocks and gave off such a stench that the attendants altogether refused to admit him to the hospital or to keep him there. But before long he rejoiced in being delivered by the merits of the most blessed father Francis, whose compassion he had implored.

132. There was a little girl of Gubbio whose hands were contracted and she had wholly lost the use of all her limbs for a year past. In order to obtain for her the favour of health, her nurse carried her with a waxen image to the tomb of the most blessed father Francis.

And after staying there for the space of eight days, one day all her limbs were completely restored to their uses, so as to be fit as usual for their original functions.

133. Another boy from Montenero lay before the doors of the church where the body of S. Francis rests, for several days, being unable to walk or to sit up, for from the waist down he was deprived of all strength and of the use of his limbs. But one day, having been brought into the church, after touching the sepulchre of the most blessed father Francis he came out sound and whole. And the little boy himself used to say that while he was lying before the tomb of the glorious saint, a young man stood before him over the tomb, clad in the habit of the brethren and carrying pears in his hands, who called him, offered him a pear, and encouraged him to rise. The boy took the pear from his hands and answered, "See, I am bound together and cannot get up at all". Then he ate the pear that had been given him and stretched out his hand for another, which the same youth was offering him. Again he urged the boy to get up, but he did not do so, feeling himself held down by his infirmity. But as he was stretching his hand out for the pear, the young man after giving him the pear took his hand, led him out, and disappeared from his sight. The boy, seeing that he was made whole, began to cry aloud, showing to all what had been done in him.

134. A woman from the fortress of Coccorano was brought in a basket to the glorious father's tomb, for she had lost the use of all her members except her tongue. After staying a while before the most holy man's tomb she arose perfectly cured.

Another citizen of Gubbio after bringing his son, who was bowed together, in a basket to the holy father's tomb, received him back sound and whole, though he had been bowed in so extraordinary a way that his legs adhered to the buttocks and were quite withered.

135. Bartholomew of the city of Narni, a very poor and needy man, once fell asleep under a walnut-tree, and when he awoke he found himself so bent that he could not walk. As the infirmity gradually increased, one leg and foot became emaciated, crooked and withered; and insensible to cutting and burning. But the most holy Francis, the true lover of the poor and father of all the needy, showed himself to this man one night in a vision, bidding him go to a certain bath where he, moved by compassion for such misery, would release him from this sickness. When the man awoke, not knowing what to do, he told the vision in order to the bishop, and the bishop signed him with the Cross and blessed him, bidding him hasten to the bath that had been ordered. So the man, leaning on a stick, began to drag himself to the place as well as he could: and as he was sorrowfully going along, worn out by the great labour, he heard a voice saying to him, "Go in the peace of the Lord, for I am he to whom thou hast made thy vow". Then as he was approaching the bath, he missed the way (for it was night) and again heard a voice telling him that he was not walking by the right way, and directing him to the bath. And when he had reached the place and had entered the bath he felt one hand laid upon his foot, and another on his leg, gently stretching it out:

and so, being cured straightway, he jumped out of the bath praising and blessing the omnipotence of the Creator, and blessed Francis His servant, who had bestowed on him such favour and power.

The man had been crooked, and a beggar, for six years, and was of advanced age.

Of the blind receiving sight

136. A woman named Sibyl who had suffered from blindness of the eyes for several years was brought sorrowing to the sepulchre of the man of God: but on recovering her former sight she returned home rejoicing and exultant.

A blind man of Spello recovered his long-lost sight before the tomb of the holy body.

Another woman of Camerino had been entirely deprived of the light of her right eye. Her parents laid on the eye a cloth that blessed Francis had touched, and so, having made a vow, they yielded thanks to the Lord God and S. Francis for the recovered light.

Something similar happened to a woman of Gubbio, who, after making a vow, rejoiced in the recovery of her former sight.

A citizen of Assisi who had lost the light of his eyes for five years, having been intimate with blessed Francis while he lived, always in praying to the blessed man used to recall this intimacy, and, on touching his sepulchre was healed.

One Albertino of Narni had wholly lost the sight of his eyes for about a year and his eyelids hung down to his cheeks. He made a vow to blessed Francis, and forthwith having recovered his sight, made ready, and went to visit his glorious sepulchre.

Of the healing of demoniacs

137. There was a man in the city of Foligno named Peter who when on his way to visit the threshold of blessed Michael the Archangel,[1] either in fulfilment of a vow, or as a penance enjoined on him for sins, came to a certain spring. Being wearied with the journey and thirsty he tasted some of the water of the spring, and it seemed to him that he had imbibed devils: and so, being molested by them, during three years he did things horrid to see and detestable to tell. Then he came to the most holy father's tomb, and here, while the devils were raging, and cruelly mauling him, he was wondrously delivered on touching the sepulchre, by a clear and manifest miracle.

138. In the city of Narni was a woman who was a prey to terrible frenzy, and being out of her mind, did horrible things and spoke unseemly words. At length blessed Francis appeared to her in a vision, saying, "Sign thyself with the cross," and on her answering, "I cannot," the Saint himself impressed the sign of the cross upon her and drove out from her her madness and demoniacal fancies.

Many men and women also, tormented in various ways by devils, and deluded by their jugglery were snatched out of their power by the noble merits of the holy and glorious father. But because people of that kind are often the victims of delusion, let us dismiss this matter briefly and pass on to more important things.

[1] *I.e.*, Monte Santangelo in Apulia.

Of sick persons saved from death; of cases of swelling, dropsy, arthritis, paralysis and other diseases

139. A boy named Matthew, of the city of Todi, had lain in bed for eight days as if dead: his mouth was fast closed, his eyes were sightless, and the skin of his face, hands and feet had turned as black as a pot. All despaired of his life, but at his mother's vow he got well with marvellous rapidity. Now there was a discharge of foul blood from his mouth, through which he was also believed to be discharging his intestines. But as soon as his mother on her knees had humbly called on the name of S. Francis, as she arose from prayer, the boy began to open his eyes, to see the light and to suck the breast; and soon after the black slough fell off, the flesh returned as before, he got better, and recovered his strength. And as soon as he began to get better his mother asked him, "Who has delivered thee, my son?" And he answered lisping, "Ciccu, Ciccu". Again he was asked, "Whose servant art thou?" and again he answered, "Ciccu, Ciccu"; for being an infant he could not speak plain, and so he clipped the name of blessed Francis in that way.

140. There was a lad who fell down from a certain very high place where he was staying and lost his speech and the use of all his limbs. After being three days without eating or drinking, or perceiving anything, he was thought to be dead. But his mother, seeking for the aid of no physicians, entreated blessed Francis to heal him. And so, having made her vow, she received him alive and whole, and began to praise the Saviour's omnipotence.

Another lad named Mancino, sick unto death, and given over by all, called, as well as he could, on the name of blessed Francis and instantly recovered.

A boy of Arezzo named Walter, suffering from continual fever and tormented by two abscesses, who had been given over by the doctors, was restored to his wished-for health by his parents' making a vow to blessed Francis.

Another, nigh to death, was forthwith freed from all his suffering by making a waxen image, and that before the image was finished.

141. A woman who had lain on her sick-bed for several years and could neither turn nor move, made a vow to God and blessed Francis, whereupon she was freed from all her sickness and performed the necessary duties of her life.

There was a woman in the city of Narni who for eight years had had a hand so withered that she could do nothing with it. At last the most blessed father Francis appeared to her in a vision, and by stretching out her hand made it as serviceable as the other.

In the same city was a lad who for ten years had been laid up with a grievous sickness, and had become so swollen that no medicine could do him good. But by the merits of blessed Francis, to whom his mother had made a vow, he immediately received the blessing of health.

In the city of Fano was a man laid up with dropsy whose limbs were horribly swollen, but through blessed Francis, he was found worthy to be wholly freed from that sickness.

A citizen of Todi suffered so terribly from gouty

arthritis that he could neither sit down nor rest. The violence of the disease gave him such constant chills that he seemed reduced to nothing. He called in doctors, he multiplied baths, he used many medicines, but none of these things could give him relief. But one day, in the presence of a priest, he made a vow in order that S. Francis might give him back his former health: and so, after offering prayers to the Saint, he presently found his former health restored.

142. A woman lying paralysed in the city of Gubbio was released from her infirmity and cured after thrice calling on the name of blessed Francis.

There was a man called Bontadoso who suffered so grievously in his hands and feet that he could neither move nor turn in any direction: and when he was now unable to eat or sleep a woman came to him one day advising and suggesting that if he would be speedily delivered from this infirmity he should most earnestly make a vow to blessed Francis. But the man, in a paroxysm of pain, answered, "I don't believe he is a Saint". The woman, however, persisted in her suggestion of the vow, and at last he made it in the following words: "I vow myself to S. Francis, and believe him to be a Saint, if he cures me of this illness within three days". And, by the merits of God's Saint, he was presently delivered, and walked, ate, and slept, giving glory to Almighty God.

143. There was a man who had been dangerously wounded in the head by an iron arrow which had penetrated the eye-socket and stuck in his head; and the doctors could give him no help. Then with humble devotion he made a vow to Francis the Saint of God,

in the hope of being delivered by his recommendation. While he was getting a little rest in sleep, S. Francis told him in a dream to have the arrow taken out by the back of his head. This was accordingly done next day, and he was relieved without great difficulty.

144. There was a man at the fortress of Spello named Imperatore who had suffered so severely from rupture for two years that all his intestines were descending outwardly through his lower parts; nor had he been able to place them back inside for a long time so that he had to have a truss wherewith to retain them inside. He went to doctors, begging them to relieve him, but as they demanded a price which he could not give inasmuch as he had not wherewithal to keep himself for a single day, he quite despaired of their help. At length he betook him to God for help, and began humbly to invoke the merits of blessed Francis, out of doors, at home, and wherever he might be. And so it came to pass that in a short space of time he was entirely cured by God's grace and blessed Francis' merits.

145. A brother in the March of Ancona, warring under the obedience of our Religion, was suffering severely from fistula in the groin, or in the side, and had already been judged by the doctors to be in a hopeless state because of the extent of the disease. Then he begged the Minister under whose obedience he was living to allow him to go and visit the place where the most blessed father's body lay, trusting that by the Saint's merits he would obtain the favour of a cure. But his Minister forbade him to go, fearing that the fatigue of the journey might make him worse, on account of the snow and rain which then prevailed.

But one night, while the brother was feeling a little vexed at the refusal of permission to go, the holy father Francis stood by him saying: "Son, be no more anxious about this, but take off the fur coat thou hast on, throw away the plaster and the bandage that is over it, and observe thy Rule, and thou shalt be delivered". So he arose in the morning, did all that he had been bidden to do, and gave thanks to God for his speedy deliverance.

Of the cleansing of lepers

146. At S. Severino in the March of Ancona there was a lad named Atto who was covered all over with scabs, and, in accordance with the physicians' judgment, was held by all as a leper: all his limbs were swollen and enlarged, and the distention and inflation of his veins caused him to see everything awry. He could not walk, but lay continually on his sick-bed, filling his parents with grief and sadness: and the father, daily wounded as he was by his son's misery, could not tell what to do with him. At last it came into his heart by all means to commend his son to blessed Francis, and he said to him: "Wilt thou, my son, make a vow to S. Francis (who is renowned for many miracles everywhere), that it may please him to deliver thee from this sickness?" And he answered: "I will, father"; whereupon his father had paper brought and, after measuring his son's height and girth, said: "Raise thyself up, my son, and make thy vow to blessed Francis, and when he has given thee deliverance thou shalt bring him a candle of thy height every year while thou livest". He rose up as well as he could, at his father's bidding, and clasping his hands began

humbly to invoke S. Francis' compassion ; and accordingly after he had taken up the paper measure, and finished his prayer, he was straightway healed of his leprosy, and arose, giving glory to God and blessed Francis, and joyfully began to walk.

In the city of Fano a lad named Bonuomo, who was held by all the doctors to be paralysed and leprous, was devoutly offered to blessed Francis by his parents; whereupon he was cleansed from his leprosy, the paralysis left him, and he gained full health.

Of the dumb speaking and the deaf hearing

147. At Castel della Pieve was a poor beggar-boy who had been entirely deaf and dumb from birth. Now his tongue was so extremely short that it seemed to several who had examined him many times as if it had been cut off. One evening he came to the house of a man of the same place who was called Mark and asked for shelter by signs, as the dumb are wont to do: for he leaned his head sideways on his hand so as to make the man understand that he wanted to lodge with him that night. The man gladly received him into his house and willingly kept him with him, for the boy was a competent servant. He was a sharp boy, for though deaf and dumb from the cradle he understood by signs all he was told to do. When the man and his wife were at supper one night and the boy was waiting on them, the man said to her: " I should consider it the greatest of miracles, if blessed Francis gave hearing and speech to this boy". (148) And he added : " I vow to the Lord God that if blessed Francis shall deign to work this, I will for his sake hold this boy most dear and provide for him all his life long". When the vow was finished, wondrous to relate, the boy spoke

straightway and said, "S. Francis lives"; and then looking behind him, he said, "I see S. Francis standing up there and he is coming to give me speech". And he added: "What therefore shall I say to the people?" Mark replied: "Thou shalt praise the Lord and shalt save many men". Then Mark arose in great joy and exultation and published before all men what had been done. All who had seen the boy speechless before ran together, and, filled with admiration and amazement, gave humble praise to God and blessed Francis. The boy's tongue grew and became fit for speech, and he began to utter properly formed words as if he had always spoken.

149. Another boy named Villa could neither speak nor walk. His mother therefore made in faith a waxen image for a votive offering and brought it very reverently to the blessed father Francis' resting-place: and on her return home she found her son walking and talking.

There was a man in the diocese of Perugia quite deprived of speech who always kept his mouth open, gaping horribly and in great distress, for his throat was very much swollen. When he reached the place where the most holy body rests and was about to go up the steps to the tomb, he vomited much blood, and, thoroughly relieved, began to speak and to open and shut his mouth as required.

150. There was a woman who suffered such pain in her throat that from the excessive burning her tongue was sticking to her palate and dried up. She could neither speak, nor eat, nor drink; plasters were applied and medicines used, but none of these things gave any relief from her infirmity. At last in her heart (for she could not speak) she made a vow to S. Francis, and

suddenly the flesh cracked and there came out of her gullet a little round stone which she took in her hand and showed to all the bystanders, whereupon she was relieved immediately.

There was a lad at the fortress of Greccio who had lost his hearing, his memory, and his speech, nor could he understand or perceive anything. But his parents, having great trust in S. Francis, made a vow to him with humble devotion on behalf of the lad; and when the vow had been fulfilled he was richly endowed by the favour of the most holy and glorious father Francis with all the senses he had lacked.

To the praise, glory, and honour of Jesus Christ our Lord whose kingdom and empire endureth firm and immovable throughout all ages. Amen.

Conclusion

151. We have said a little, and omitted more concerning the miracles of our most blessed father Francis, relinquishing to those that would tread in his footsteps the care of seeking out the grace of new blessing, to the end that he who by word and example, by his life and teaching has most gloriously renewed the whole world may ever deign to water with new showers of supercelestial unctions the minds of those who love the name of the Lord. I entreat, for the love of the Poor Man Crucified and by His sacred wounds, which the blessed father Francis bore in his body, all who read, see, or hear these things, to remember before God, me a sinner. Amen.

Blessing and honour and all praise be to God only wise Who ever most wisely worketh all in all to His glory. Amen. Amen. Amen.

THE SECOND LIFE OF S. FRANCIS

IN THE NAME OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. AMEN. TO THE MINISTER-GENERAL OF THE ORDER OF FRIARS MINOR

HERE BEGINS THE PREFACE

1. IT was the pleasure of the entire holy assembly of the late Chapter-General, and of you, most reverend father (not without a dispensation of the Divine Counsel) to enjoin on our insignificance, for the comfort of those living, and as a memorial for those to come, to write of the deeds and also of the words of our glorious father Francis, for that through long experience of them they were better known to us than to the rest by reason of our constant association with him and the mutual intimacy between us. Therefore are we forward to obey with humble devotion holy injunctions which it is by no means lawful to pass by: but the small account we are disposed to make of our own strength gives us just cause to fear, lest so worthy a matter, through not being treated of as it requires, may derive from us that which may be displeasing to the rest. For we dread that things worthy of the savour of all sweetness may be rendered insipid through the unworthiness of the dispensers of them, and that accordingly our attempt may be set down to presumption rather than to obedience. For if the examination

of the result of this great labour [of ours] only pertained to *your* good will, blessed father, and there were no question of its coming to the public ear, we should most thankfully derive instruction from your correction, or joy from your approval. For amid such a variety of words and deeds who could so weigh everything in the scale of an exact balance that all the hearers should be unanimous as to every point? But inasmuch as we are seeking with simple mind the advantage of each and all, we entreat our readers to put a kind interpretation on our work and to bear with the simplicity of the narrators or guide it in such sort that the reverence of him who is the subject of our discourse may be saved harmless. The flight of his subtle words, and the amazing story of his deeds are beyond the reach of our recollection, blunted like that of untaught men by length of time; for the agility of a practised memory were scarce able to comprehend these things even when present before it. Let therefore the repeated command of one who has many times enjoined us excuse before all men the faults of our unskilfulness.

2. This work contains first of all certain wonderful events in the conversion of S. Francis which were not put into the legends composed some time ago concerning him, because they had not come to the author's notice. Next we intend to express, and with watchful zeal to declare, what was that good, well-pleasing, and perfect will of the most holy father both as to himself and as to his brethren in every practice of heavenly discipline, and in the zeal for supreme perfection which he ever had as regards God in his sacred affections,

and as regards men in the examples he gave them. Some miracles are inserted, as occasion offers. We describe in a plain and unpretending way what presents itself to us, desiring to accommodate ourselves to those of slower wit, but also, if we may, to give pleasure to the learned. We beg you therefore, kindest father, to be pleased to hallow with your blessing the present of this work, small though not to be despised, and sought out by us with no little toil; correcting what is wrong, and removing what is superfluous, so that what is approved by your learned judgment as well said, may, together with your name, truly Crescentius,[1] everywhere increase and be multiplied in Christ. Amen.

HERE ENDS THE PREFACE

HERE BEGINS THE "MEMORIAL IN LONGING OF SOUL"[2] OF THE DEEDS AND WORDS OF OUR MOST HOLY FATHER FRANCIS

OF HIS CONVERSION

CHAPTER I

How he was first called John and afterwards Francis. How his mother prophesied of him, and how he himself also foretold what would come to pass concerning himself; and of his patience in imprisonment

3. FRANCIS, the servant and friend of the Most High (to whom Divine Providence gave this name in order that a singular and unusual designation might make the rumour of his ministry the more

[1] The writer here plays on the derivation of the name Crescentius from *crescere*, to increase.

[2] See Isaiah xxvi. 8.

quickly known to all the world) was called by his mother John when, being born again by water and the Holy Ghost, he a child of wrath became a child of grace. The conduct of this woman (a friend of all goodness) was characterised by a certain token of virtue, for she was in some sort privileged to resemble the holy Elizabeth, both as regards the giving of a name to her son, and as regards the prophetic spirit. For while her neighbours were wondering at Francis' noble bearing and courteous ways she would say (as though prompted by a Divine oracle): "How think you that this son of mine will turn out? Be assured that he will become a son of God by his merits." Such indeed was the opinion of some who were very much pleased with Francis when a stripling because of his zeal for good. He always avoided every word which might give pain to any one, and the youth's manners were so refined that he seemed to all as if born of other parents than those from whom he was said to have sprung. Now his name of John has reference to the work of the ministry which he took up, while that of Francis to the spread of his fame, which after his full conversion to God soon reached every place. Accordingly he thought that among the feasts of all other saints that of John the Baptist was pre-eminent, the dignity of whose name had imprinted on him a trace of mystic virtue. Among those born of woman none has arisen greater than John: among the founders of Religions none has arisen more perfect than Francis. An observation surely worthy to be heralded!

4. John prophesied shut up within the secret place of his mother's womb; Francis confined in a worldly

prison foretold the future while still ignorant of the Divine counsel. For once when there was a bloody battle between the citizens of Perugia and those of Assisi, Francis with several others was taken, and being put in chains with the rest endured the horrors of imprisonment. His fellow-captives, absorbed in sadness, bewailed their wretched plight: Francis, exulting in the Lord, laughed at his chains and despised them. His doleful companions rebuked him for making merry in his chains, and deemed him mad and demented. Francis answered prophetically: "Wherein think you that I exult? Another thought is with me: I shall yet be worshipped as a Saint all the world over." (And so indeed it is: all he said has been fulfilled.) Among his fellow-prisoners was a knight, a very proud and unbearable man: but, while all the rest determined to shun him, Francis' patience did not fail. He endured the unendurable knight and induced the others to make it up with him. Capable of every grace the chosen vessel now pours forth unctions of virtue everywhere![1]

CHAPTER II

Of a poor knight whom he clothed; and of the vision of his call which he saw while in the world

5. HAVING been loosed from his chains after a while, he became more kindly compassionate toward the poor. He now resolved never to turn

[1] Or, "the chosen vessel of the virtues now pours forth unctions everywhere".

his face from any poor man who in his petition should plead "the love of God". Once he met a knight who was poor and almost naked, and being admonished by pity gave him freely for Christ's sake the costly attire he was wearing. How did his behaviour differ from that of the most holy Martin except that while they were one in their purpose and in their act they were unlike in their manner of doing it? Francis gave his clothes before the rest of his possessions, Martin first gave up all the rest and his clothes last: each lived poorly and scantily in the world; each entered heaven rich. The one a knight but a poor man cut his garment in two to clothe a poor man, the other a rich man but not a knight clothed a poor knight with an entire garment. Each, having fulfilled Christ's command, was found worthy to be visited by Christ in a vision, the one being praised for his perfection, the other most graciously invited to fulfil what was lacking.[1]

6. Presently Francis was shown in a vision[2] a beautiful palace wherein he saw various warlike accoutrements and a lovely bride. In the dream Francis was called by name and allured by the promise of all this. He endeavoured, therefore, to go to Apulia to win knighthood; and after making the needful preparations on a lavish scale he hastened toward the attainment of the knightly dignity. A carnal spirit was suggesting to him a carnal interpretation of the vision he had seen, whereas a far more glorious one lay hid in the treasures of God's wisdom.

[1] *I.e.*, to be baptized. [2] *Cf.* above, I., 4-6.

Accordingly one night when he was sleeping he was addressed a second time in a vision and strictly questioned as to whither he intended to go. And when he had told his purpose to his questioner, saying that he was going to war in Apulia, the same questioner earnestly asked him who could do better for him, the servant or the lord? "The lord," said Francis. "Why, then," answered the other, "art thou seeking the servant instead of the lord?" Then Francis said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And the Lord said to him, "Go back to the place of thy birth, for through Me thy vision shall have spiritual fulfilment". He went back without delay (having already become a pattern of obedience) and, resigning his own will, became Paul instead of Saul. Saul was thrown to the earth, and heavy stripes produced words of sweetness; but Francis turned his carnal weapons into spiritual, and instead of martial glory received a Divine government.

And so to the many who were amazed at his unwonted gladness he said that he was going to be a great prince.

CHAPTER III

How a band of youths made him their master of the revels, so that he might feed them: and of the change that came over him

7. HE began to be changed into a perfect man and to become other than he had been. So on his return home the children of Babylon followed him and dragged him, now that he was tending else-

whither, to other pursuits even against his will; for a band of young fellows of Assisi, whose leader he had formerly been in their vanity, still continued to invite him to share their feasts, which always ministered to wantonness and buffoonery. They made him their chief, for, having often experienced his liberality, they knew without doubt that he would pay the expenses of them all. They yielded him obedience that they might fill their bellies, and endured subjection that they might be able to glut themselves. He did not refuse the proffered honour, that he might not be taxed with stinginess, and amid his holy meditations was mindful of good-fellowship. He prepared a sumptuous banquet and doubled the dainties, and his guests, filled with them even to vomiting, polluted the streets of the town with their drunken songs. Francis followed them carrying a staff in his hands as master of the revels; but by degrees he withdrew from them in body, being already in mind become deaf to such things, as he sang in his heart to the Lord. Then (as he himself related) he was filled with such Divine sweetness, that he became speechless and was quite unable to move from the spot. Then a kind of spiritual affection pervaded him, carrying him away to things invisible, by virtue whereof he judged all earthly things [not only] of no moment but entirely worthless. Amazing indeed is the condescension of Christ Who gives to those that do the least things the greatest gifts, and in the overflowing of waters preserves and advances those that are His! For Christ fed the crowds with bread and fish, nor did He repel sinners from His feast. When they

sought to make Him their king He fled and went up into a mountain to pray.

It was God's mysteries that Francis was finding out, and even in ignorance he was being led to perfect knowledge.

CHAPTER IV

How, clad in a poor man's garments, he ate with the poor before S. Peter's church: and of the offering that he made there

8. BUT even now he was the chief lover of the poor, even now his holy beginnings gave a hint of the perfection he was to attain. Accordingly he often stript himself to clothe the poor, striving already with his whole heart to become like them, though not as yet executing his purpose in deed. Once when going on pilgrimage to Rome he put off his choice apparel for Poverty's sake, and covered with a poor man's clouts joyfully sat down among the poor in the parvis before S. Peter's church (a place abounding in poor), and eagerly ate with them, deeming himself as one of them. Many times he would have done the like, had he not been ashamed of doing it before those who knew him.

When he came to the altar of the chief of the Apostles he wondered that the offerings of the visitors there were so small, and threw down a handful of money at that place, thus pointing out that special honour should be paid by all to him whom God honoured above the rest.

Several times also he presented poor priests with church ornaments; and he paid due respect to them

all, even to them of lower degree. For, as one who was about to take on him the apostolic commission and was whole and entire in the Catholic faith, he was from the first full of reverence toward the ministers and service of God.

CHAPTER V

How as he was praying the devil showed him a woman; and concerning the answer which God gave him; and his treatment of lepers

9. THUS already beneath his worldly attire he wore the spirit of Religion, and, withdrawing from frequented places to solitary ones, he was full often admonished by visitations of the Holy Ghost. For he was carried away and drawn on by that chiefest sweetness which was shed upon him so abundantly even from the first that it never left him as long as he lived. But while he was frequenting hidden places (as being suitable for prayer) the Devil strove to disturb his devotions by a malign counterfeit. He made him think of a certain woman, an inhabitant of his city, who was monstrously hunchbacked and presented a hideous sight to all: and he threatened to make him resemble her if he did not give up what he had begun. But the Lord of salvation and of grace encouraged him, and he rejoiced as he heard this answer: "Francis," said God to him in the spirit, "thou shalt exchange what thou hast loved carnally and vainly for spiritual things; and, if thou wilt acknowledge Me, take thou the bitter instead of the sweet, and despise thyself, for the savour of the things whereof I speak to thee shall be to thee reversed". Forthwith he was compelled to

obey the Divine behests, and was led to actual experience; for among all the wretched spectacles of the world Francis naturally shrank from lepers; and one day while he was riding near Assisi he met a leper, and though the leper caused him no small disgust and horror, still, lest like a transgressor of the commandment he should break the obligation of his plighted faith, he dismounted and hastened to the leper in order to kiss him: and when the leper held out his hand as though to receive something, he received money and a kiss with it. Francis immediately remounted, and as he looked round this way and that, though the country was free and open on all sides and there were no obstacles, he could not see that leper at all: whereat he was filled with wonder and joy, and a few days after gave heed to do the like again. He went to the abodes of lepers and, as he gave each leper money, he kissed him on the hand and mouth. Thus he took the bitter instead of the sweet, and manfully prepared to perform the rest.

CHAPTER VI

Of the image of the Crucified which spoke to him, and of the honour he paid to it

10. BEING now perfectly changed in heart (and soon to be changed in body too) he was walking one day by the church of S. Damian, which was almost ruinous, and was forsaken of all men. Led by the Spirit, he went in to pray. He fell down before the crucifix in devout supplication, and, having

been smitten by unwonted visitations, found himself another man than he who had gone in. And, while he was thus moved, straightway—a thing unheard of for ages—the painted image of Christ crucified moved its lips and addressed him, calling him by name: "Francis," it said, "go repair My house, which as thou seest is wholly falling into ruin". Francis, trembling and in no small amazement, became well-nigh deranged by this address. He prepared to obey and was wholly intent on fulfilling the commandment. But forasmuch as he felt that the change he had undergone was ineffable, it becomes us to be silent concerning that which he himself could not express. Thenceforth compassion for the Crucified was fixed in his holy soul, and (as we may piously suppose) the stigmata of the venerable Passion were deeply imprinted on his heart though not as yet on his flesh. (11) A wondrous thing and unheard of in our times! Who is not amazed at this? Who ever heard the like? Who doubts that Francis now returning to his native land appeared crucified when, though he had not altogether set aside the world outwardly, Christ by a new and unheard-of miracle spoke to him from the wood of the Cross? From that hour therefore when the Beloved spake to him, his soul was melted: and ere long the love of the heart appeared by the wounds of the body. Thenceforth, therefore, he could not refrain from weeping, even bewailing aloud the Passion of Christ ever as it were set forth before his eyes. He filled the ways with groanings, nor would he be comforted, as he remembered the wounds of Christ. He met an intimate friend, to whom he dis-

closed the cause of his grief, and forthwith his friend was moved to tears of woe.

But he did not forget to take thought for that holy image, nor did he in any wise neglect its bidding. Straightway he gave money to some priest that he might buy a lamp and oil, lest the sacred image should be defrauded, even for a moment, of its due honour of light. Then he diligently hastened to accomplish the rest; and gave untiring toil to the repair of that church. For, though the Divine words addressed to him referred to that Church which Christ acquired by His own Blood, he would not reach the highest point suddenly, for he was about to pass gradually from the flesh to the spirit.

CHAPTER VII

Of the persecution of his father and his brother after the flesh

12. BUT now that he was applying himself to works of piety his father after the flesh persecuted him, and, deeming Christ's service madness, he assailed him everywhere with curses. So God's servant called to his aid a certain low-born and very simple man whom he adopted in the stead of his father, asking him that when his father redoubled his curses, he on the contrary should bless him. Truly he turned the prophet's word into action and showed by deeds what that saying betokens: "They shall curse but thou shalt bless".

At the persuasion of the bishop of the city, a very pious man, who told him that he might not spend anything ill-gotten [1] on sacred purposes, Francis gave up to

[1] *Cf.* above, I., 8, 9.

his father some money he had meant to lay out on the work at the said church; and in the hearing of the many who had come together, "Henceforth," he cried, "I may freely say 'our Father who art in heaven,' not any more 'father Pietro di Bernardone,' to whom lo! I not only restore the money but give up all my clothes.[1] Naked therefore will I go to the Lord." (O liberal spirit of the man to whom now Christ alone is sufficient!) It was then found that the man of God had been wearing sackcloth under his clothes, rejoicing rather in the reality than in the appearance of virtue. His brother after the flesh, even as his father, pursued him with venomous words; and one winter morning, seeing Francis at prayer clothed in rags and shivering with cold, that wicked man said to one of his fellow-townsmen, "Ask Francis to sell you now a pennyworth of sweat". But when the man of God heard this he was filled with gladness and answered with a smile, "Indeed I will sell my sweat very dear to my Lord". Nothing more true: for he received not only a hundred but a thousandfold more in this life, and won not for himself alone but also for many eternal life hereafter.

[1] *Cf.* I., 14, 15.

CHAPTER VIII

Of the bashfulness which he conquered; and of his prophecy of the Poor Virgins

13. AND so he strove to reverse his former delicate way of life and to bring his body from luxurious indulgence back to natural goodness.

One day the man of God was going through Assisi to beg for oil that he might trim the lamps in S. Damian's church which he was then repairing; and when he saw a crowd of men at play before the house he wanted to go into he was filled with shame and drew back. But then, directing that noble spirit of his to heaven, he reproved his own cowardice and passed judgment on himself. Straightway he went back to the house, set forth aloud before all the cause of his shame, and in a kind of spiritual intoxication asked in French for oil and received it. Most fervently did he stir up all to the work of that church; and in the hearing of all he prophesied, speaking in clear tones in French, that there would be a monastery of holy virgins of Christ in that place. For whenever he was filled with the ardour of the Holy Spirit he would utter ardent words in French; foreknowing that among that people he would receive peculiar honour and be revered with special regard.

CHAPTER IX

Of his begging for food from door to door

14. FROM the time when he began to serve the common Lord of all he ever loved to do common things, avoiding in everything singularity, which is befouled with the blemish of every vice. And so while he was toiling at the work on the church concerning which he had received a command from Christ, and from being a very delicately nurtured man had become a hard-working peasant, the priest of the church, seeing that he was worn out by assiduous labour, was moved with pity, and began to supply him every day with some special food, though it was not dainty, because the priest was poor. But though Francis approved of the priest's discernment and welcomed his kindness, he said to himself, "Thou wilt not find this priest everywhere to supply thee always with such things. This is not the life of a man professing poverty; it is not good for thee to get accustomed to such treatment; by degrees thou wilt return to what thou hast despised; and wilt once more run after delicacies. Arise now quickly and beg from door to door for scraps of food." So he went from door to door in Assisi, begging for cooked victuals, and when he saw his bowl full of odds and ends he was at first filled with loathing; but then he thought of God, conquered himself, and ate the food with delight of spirit. Love softens all things and makes every sweet thing bitter.

CHAPTER X

Of brother Bernard's renunciation of his property

15. ONE Bernard of the city of Assisi (who was afterwards a son of perfection) was framing his mind perfectly to set at naught the world after the man of God's example, and humbly besought his advice. And so as he consulted him he said, "Father, if any one had for a long time been in possession of some lord's goods, and did not wish to keep them any longer, how should he dispose of them most perfectly?" The man of God answered, that they must all be given back to his lord, from whom he had received them. Then said Bernard, "I acknowledge that all my possessions were given me by God, and now here I stand, ready to give them back to Him, according to thy advice". "If thou wilt prove thy words by deeds," said the Saint, "let us go to church early in the morning, take the book of the Gospel, and seek counsel of Christ." So in the morning they went to church, and, after devout prayer, opened the book of the Gospel, resolved to fulfil the first counsel they should happen on. They laid open the book and Christ therein laid open His counsel: "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell all thou hast and give to the poor". They did it a second time, when "Take nothing on the way" met their eye. They tried yet a third time, when they found, "He who will come after Me, let him deny himself". Without delay Bernard fulfilled all these things, nor did he fail in so much as a jot of this counsel.

In a short time very many were turned from the corroding cares of the world, and to their infinite advantage returned under Francis' guidance to their native land. It would be too long to go on and tell how each one attained the prize of the high calling.

CHAPTER XI

Of the similitude which he set forth before the Pope

16. AT the time when Francis presented himself with his followers before Pope Innocent[1] to ask for a Rule for their life, the Pope, who saw that Francis' proposed way of life was beyond his strength, being a man of the utmost discernment, said to him, "Pray, my son, to Christ, that through thee He may show us His will; and when we know it we shall be able more safely to comply with thy pious desires". The Saint obeyed the Supreme Pastor's bidding and confidently flew to Christ. He prayed earnestly and encouraged his companions to pray devoutly to God. To be brief, he obtained an answer by prayer and imparted to his sons news of salvation. Christ's familiar discourse was made known in parables: "Francis," He said, "thus shalt thou say to the Pope: A poor but beautiful woman dwelt in a wilderness. A king loved her for her exceeding comeliness. He married her gladly, and begat beauteous sons by her. When they were grown and had been nobly brought up their mother said to them, 'Be not ashamed, beloved, that ye are poor, for ye are all sons of that great king. Go there-

[1] *Cf.* above, I., 32, 33.

fore gladly to his court and ask him for all that ye need.' As they heard this, they wondered and rejoiced; and, heartened by the assurance of their royal origin, deemed all want to be riches, knowing that they would be heirs. They boldly presented themselves to the king nor feared the face of him whose image they bore. The king, recognising his own likeness in them, inquired with wonder whose sons they were. And while they affirmed that they were the sons of that poor woman dwelling in the wilderness, the king embraced them and said, 'Ye are my sons and heirs, fear not. For if strangers are fed from my table it is the more just that I should cause them to be fed for whom my whole inheritance is reserved by law.' So the king sent to the woman bidding her despatch all the sons whom he had begotten to be nourished at his court." The Saint was glad and rejoiced at the parable, and straightway reported the sacred oracle to the Pope.

17. This woman was Francis, fruitful in many sons not fashioned in softness. The wilderness was the world, at that time untilled and barren in the teaching of virtue. The beauteous and ample progeny of sons was the multitude of the brethren adorned with every virtue. The king was the Son of God, to Whom they, resembling Him in holy poverty, correspond in appearance; and they receive nourishment from the king's table, despising all cowardly shame, for that, content to imitate Christ, and living on alms, they know, amid the reproaches of the world, that they are to be blessed.

The Lord Pope wondered at the parable put before him, and acknowledged without hesitation that Christ

had spoken in the man. He recalled a vision that he had himself seen a few days before, and affirmed, under the teaching of the Holy Ghost, that it also would be fulfilled in this man. He had seen in his sleep that the Lateran basilica was on the point of falling and that a certain Religious, a man small and despised, was propping it on his own back, that it might not fall. "Surely," said he, "this is he who by his acts and teaching shall prop the Church of Christ." Whence it was that that lord so readily yielded to his request, and that, filled with devotion to God, he ever loved Christ's servant with special affection. And so he quickly granted what he had been asked, and earnestly promised to grant yet greater things than these. And thenceforth by virtue of the authority conferred on him Francis began to scatter the seeds of virtue, preaching yet more fervently as he went about the cities and fortresses.

CHAPTER XII

Of S. Maria de Portiuncula

18. GOD'S servant Francis, small in person, humble in mind, a "Minor" by profession, chose, while living in the world, for himself and his brethren a "little portion" (*portiuncula*) of the world, since otherwise, without having anything of the world, he could not serve Christ. Now it was not without the foreknowledge of a Divine oracle that from ancient days the place which was to fall to the lot of them who desired to have nothing at all of the world had been

called Portiuncula. There also had been built a church of the Virgin Mother who by her unexampled humility was found worthy to be the head of all the Saints next after her Son. There the Order of Friars Minor began, and there as on a firm foundation the noble fabric of them in manifold number arose. This place the Saint loved above all others, this he bade his brethren respect with special reverence, this he willed ever to be kept as the mirror of the Religion in the utmost humility and poverty, reserving the property therein to others and retaining but the use of it for himself and his brethren. (19) The strictest discipline was observed there in all things, as well in respect of silence and work as of the other ordinances of the Rule. No one might be admitted there except specially appointed brethren gathered from all quarters whom the Saint would have to be truly devoted to God and perfect in every respect. So also access to it was entirely forbidden to all persons of the world. He would not have the brethren who dwelt there (who were limited to a certain number) itching to hear news of the world; lest their contemplation of heavenly things should be interrupted and they be dragged down by tattlers to lower intercourse. No one there might utter idle words or repeat them if uttered by others: and if at any time any one happened to do so, punishment taught him to be careful in future not to do it again. Those who abode there were occupied incessantly day and night in praising God, and, fragrant with a wondrous perfume, led a life of angels. And rightly so: for, as old inhabitants reported, the place used to be otherwise called S. Mary of the Angels.

The happy father used to say that it had been revealed to him by God that among all other churches in the world built in her honour the Blessed Virgin loved this one with special affection; and therefore the Saint loved it more than all the rest.

CHAPTER XIII

Of a certain vision

20. BEFORE his conversion a certain devout brother had seen concerning this church a vision that is worth relating. He saw countless men smitten with woful blindness kneeling round this church with their faces lifted toward heaven: and they were all stretching their hands upward and crying with lamentable voice to God, asking for mercy and light. And lo! there came a great brightness from heaven and spread itself over them all, giving light and longed-for healing to each one.

OF THE CONVERSATION OF S. FRANCIS AND THE BRETHREN

CHAPTER XIV

Of the rigour of discipline

21. CHRIST'S strenuous knight never spared his body, but exposed it, as something alien to himself, to all ill-treatment both in deed and word. Any one who should enumerate the things this man endured would exceed that Apostolic passage[1] where-

[1] Heb. xi. 35-38.

in the distresses of the Saints are rehearsed. Moreover, all that first school so subjected themselves to every discomfort that it was thought wickedness for any one to refresh himself by aught save the consolation of the Spirit. And whereas they girded and clothed themselves with iron hoops and coats of mail and afflicted themselves with many vigils and continual fasts, they would have succumbed many a time had they not relaxed the rigour of such abstinence at the diligent admonition of their tender shepherd.

CHAPTER XV

Of S. Francis' discretion

22. ONE night one of the sheep cried out, the rest being asleep: "I am dying, brethren—see, I am dying of hunger!" The good shepherd arose forthwith, and hastened to minister the fitting remedy to the ailing sheep. He bade the table to be spread, though it were furnished with rustic cates alone, and (as often happened) water supplied the want of wine. He himself began first to eat, and invited the other brethren to share in this office of charity, lest that brother should pine from shame. Then after they had taken food in the fear of God, that nothing might fail of the office of charity the father discoursed at large to his sons on the virtue of discretion. He bade them ever yield to God a sacrifice seasoned with salt, carefully warning them each to have regard to his own strength in the service of God. To deprive the body indiscreetly of its due was, he said, a sin like that of

giving it too much at the prompting of gluttony. And he added: "Know, dear brethren, that what I have done in eating now, I have done by dispensation, not by inclination, at the bidding of brotherly charity. Let the charity be your example, not the food; for food ministers to gluttony, but charity to the spirit."

CHAPTER XVI

Of his foreseeing the future. How he committed the Religion to the Church of Rome: and of a certain vision

23. AS the holy father continued to profit in virtue and in the merits of his life, while the stock of his sons was now spreading everywhere and multiplying in numbers and grace, and was stretching forth branches wondrous for their fertility in fruits, he began often to ponder anxiously how that new planting might be preserved and increase, bound together by the bond of unity. At that time he saw very many raging like wolves against the little flock, and men grown old in evil taking occasion from the mere fact of its youth to do it harm. He foresaw that even among his sons things contrary to holy peace and charity might occur, and he doubted that (as often happens among the elect) some, puffed up by carnal feeling, and in spirit quarrelsome and prone to discord, might rebel. (24) And while the man of God was often meditating on these and similar things, one night he saw this vision in his sleep. He beheld a little black hen, like a tame dove, whose legs and feet

were feathered all over. She had countless chicks which pressed eagerly round her but could not all be gathered under her wings. The man of God arose from sleep, recalled his meditations, and himself became the interpreter of his vision. "I am this hen," said he, "small in stature and black by nature, who ought through innocence of life to be attended by that dove-like simplicity, which wings its rapid flight to heaven, even as it is most rare in the world. The chicks are the brethren, multiplied in number and in grace, whom Francis' strength suffices not to defend from the disturbance of men and the gainsaying of tongues. I will therefore go and commend them to the holy Church of Rome, that by the rod of her power the ill-disposed may be smitten and the children of God enjoy full freedom everywhere, to the increase of eternal salvation. So shall the sons acknowledge their mother's loving-kindnesses and ever attend her reverend footsteps with peculiar devotion. With her to protect it, no evil shall befal the Order, nor shall a son of Belial pass through the vineyard of the Lord unpunished. Herself, our holy mother, shall be jealous for the glory of our poverty, nor will she suffer the fame of [our] humility to be darkened by the mists of pride. She will preserve inviolate in us the bonds of charity and peace and strike the froward with her sternest censure. The holy observance of Gospel purity shall flourish in her sight continually, nor will she suffer the fragrance of [her children's] life to vanish even for an hour." This was the whole intention of the Saint of God when he determined so to commend himself. These were the holy teachings of the man of God's

foresight concerning the necessity for such a measure against the time to come.

CHAPTER XVII

How he asked to have the Lord of Ostia for a Pope

25. SO the man of God came to Rome[1] and was received by the Lord Pope Honorius and all the Cardinals with great respect; for that which had been fragrant in report shone in his life and sounded on his tongue; and when this is the case there is no room for disrespect. He preached before the Pope and Cardinals with readiness and fervour, giving full utterance to all the promptings of his spirit. The mountains were moved at his word, and heaving deep sighs from their profound recesses bathed the inner man with tears. When the sermon was ended, after a few words of friendly discourse with the Lord Pope, Francis at length petitioned him as follows: "My lord, as you know, access to such Majesty as yours is not readily granted to men poor and despised. You hold the world in your hands, and businesses of vast moment allow you not to attend to the smallest matters. Wherefore (he said) I beg of your Holiness' compassion that this Lord of Ostia may be granted us for a Pope, to the end that, saving always the dignity of your pre-eminence, the brethren may resort to him in time of need and fetch from him the benefits both of protection and of governance." So holy a petition

[1] *Cf.* above, I., 73.

was pleasing in the Pope's sight, and presently (as the man of God had asked) he set the Lord Hugo, then Bishop of Ostia, over the Religion. That holy Cardinal welcomed the flock entrusted to him, became their diligent foster-father, and continued [at once] their shepherd and their nursling until his blessed decease. To [this] special subjection are due the privilege of love and the care which the Holy Roman Church has never ceased to display to the Order of Friars Minor.

END OF THE FIRST PART

INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND PART

26. THE preservation of the noble deeds of forefathers in the memory of their children is a token of the honour of the former and of the love of the latter. Verily those who have not seen in the body their forefathers are provoked to that which is good and advanced to that which is better by the mere hearing of their exploits when the evidences of their memorable deeds bring them before the children from whom they are separated by the lapse of time. And in the first place we gain from this no little profit—I mean the knowledge of our own littleness, when we see how great was the abundance of their merits, and how great is the lack of ours.

Now I deem blessed Francis to have been a most holy mirror of the holiness of the Lord, and an image of His perfection. All this man's words, I say, and all his deeds have a certain Divine savour, and if they be looked into by a diligent and humble disciple they will soon imbue him with wholesome discipline and make him acceptable to that supreme philosophy.

Therefore though I have already written some things concerning him—in humble style indeed and as it were in passing—I think it not superfluous to add some few things out of many whereby both the Saint may be commended and our slumbering affection aroused.

CHAPTER I

Of the spirit of prophecy that blessed Francis had

27. THE blessed father, borne up by a certain exaltation above mundane things, had by wondrous power brought into subjection whatever is on earth, for, ever directing the eye of the intellect to the Supreme Light, not only did he know by Divine revelation what was to be done, but he foretold many things by the spirit of prophecy. He peered into the secrets of the heart, was conscious of things absent, and foretold the future.

Examples prove what we say.

CHAPTER II

How he knew that one who was thought holy was counterfeit

28. THERE was a brother, so far as could be seen outwardly, of uncommon holiness; exemplary in life, but very singular. He applied himself continually to prayer, and kept silence with such strictness that his custom was to confess not by words but by signs. The words of Scripture filled him with great ardour, and after hearing them he relished them with wondrous sweetness. In short, he was deemed by all thrice holy. It happened that the blessed father came to the "place," saw the brother and heard [him called a] saint. When all were commending and magnifying him the father replied: "Give it up, brethren, and don't praise the Devil's counterfeits in him to me! Know in truth that

this is a devilish temptation and a fraudulent deception. I am sure of it, and his refusing to confess is the strongest proof that it is so." The brethren took this ill, and especially the Saint's vicar. "And how," said they, "can it be true that amid so many tokens of perfection we are being cheated by fraudulent counterfeits?" The father answered, "Let him be admonished to confess twice, or [at least[1]] once in a week: and if he will not do it, you will know that what I have said is true." The vicar took him aside, and after first rallying him in a friendly way, finally enjoined him to confess. He refused, intimating by putting his finger to his mouth and shaking his head that he would by no means confess. The brethren were silent, fearing to scandalize the false saint. Not many days after, he left the Religion of his own accord, turned again to the world, and went back to his vomit. At length, redoubling his misdeeds, he was deprived at once of penitence and of life.

We should ever be on our guard against singularity, which is nothing else but a fair-seeming precipice: and with regard to it, several singular ones have found by experience that they ascend to the heavens and then go down to the abyss. But give heed to the virtue of devout confession, for it not only makes a man holy but shows that he is so.

[1] Supplied from *Spec. Perf.*, 102, which see.

CHAPTER III

A similar case. Against singularity

29. A SIMILAR case was that of another brother named Thomas of Spoleto. The entire belief and fixed idea of all was that he was a saint: but his apostasy proved at length the truth of the holy father's judgment that he was wicked. He did not long continue [in the Order] because virtue sought by fraud is not lasting; but left it and died outside it. Now he knows what he did.

CHAPTER IV

How he foretold the overthrow of the Christians at Damietta

30. AT the time when the army of the Christians was besieging Damietta, the Saint of God and some of his companions were there, for they had crossed the sea in their ardour for martyrdom. And when our soldiers were preparing for battle on a certain day, the holy man heard of it, and was exceedingly grieved, and said to his companion: "If they fight on such a day the Lord hath showed me that the Christians will not prosper. But if I tell them this I shall be deemed a fool, while if I keep silence I shall not elude my conscience. What, then, thinkest thou?" His companion answered: "Make no account of being judged by men, for thou art not now first beginning to be deemed a fool. Discharge thy conscience, and fear God rather than men." So the Saint arose and gave salutary

warning to the Christians, urging them not to fight, and announcing disaster if they did. But they turned the truth into ridicule, hardened their hearts and refused to be warned. They went, they joined battle, they fought and our men were hard pressed by the foe. During the fight the Saint being in suspense made his companion go up to watch; and as he saw nothing the first and second times he bade him look out the third time: and, lo! the Christian army was in full flight, ending the day in shame and not in triumph. So great were the losses of our men in this disaster that 6,000 were killed and captured.[1] The Saint was full of compassion for our men, nor were they less full of regret for what they had done. But he specially mourned over the Spaniards, when he saw that their greater impetuosity in fighting had left but a few of them remaining. Let the princes of the world take cognisance of these things, and know that it is not easy to fight against God, that is, against the Lord's will. Frowardness is wont to end in destruction, for while it relies on its own strength it deserves not help from heaven. But if victory is to be hoped for from on high, battles must be fought in the spirit of God.

CHAPTER V

Of a brother the secrets of whose heart he knew

31. AT the time when S. Francis was returning from beyond the sea, having brother Leonard of Assisi as his companion, it chanced that,

[1] Aug. 29th, 1219.

being weary with the journey, he was riding for a while on an ass. His companion was walking behind, and being not a little tired, yielded a little to mortal weakness, and began to say to himself: "This man's parents and mine were not wont to play together as equals. But now he is riding, and I on foot am driving his ass!" While this thought was passing through his mind the holy man dismounted forthwith, saying: "No, brother, it is not meet that I should ride and thou be walking, because in the world thou wast nobler and mightier than I". Brother Leonard was abashed; he turned red, and knew that the holy man had seen through him; he fell at his feet, and, bathed in tears, laid bare his thought, and asked for pardon.

CHAPTER VI

Of the brother over whom he saw a devil. Against those who withdraw from unity

32. THERE was another brother, distinguished by fame among men, and still more distinguished through grace in the sight of God. Now the father of all envy envied this man for his virtues and thought to cut down the tree that was already touching heaven and to snatch the crown away from his hands. He encompassed, overturned, battered and sifted the things that were his,[1] if by any means he might put a fitting obstacle in that brother's way. And so he inspired

[1] "The things that were his" seems to mean the various elements forming the brother's character; the idea being that the Devil ransacked the brother's character in order to discover its weakest point.

him with a desire of solitude, under the semblance of greater perfection, in order that he might at length rush upon him alone and make him fall the quicker, and that falling alone he might have none to lift him up. To be brief, that brother severed himself from the Religion of the brethren and wandered through the world like a stranger and a pilgrim. Of the tunic of his habit he made a little tunic, with the hood detached; and so he went about, despising himself in everything. Now it came to pass that while he was thus wandering, God's comfort was soon withdrawn from him, and he was tossed by a storm of temptations. The waters came in even unto his soul, and his inward and outward man being thus made desolate, he went along like a bird hastening to the snare. And even now he was, as it were, close to the abyss, and being borne headlong over the precipice, when the eye of fatherly providence pitied the wretch and looked upon him in kindness. And so he recovered his understanding by affliction, and at last he came to himself and said, "Return, wretched one, to Religion, for there is thy salvation!" He tarried not, but arose straightway and hastened to his mother's bosom. (33) And when he came to the "place" of the brethren in Siena S. Francis was there: and as soon as the Saint saw him (wonderful to say) he fled from him, hurried to a cell and shut himself in. The excited brethren inquired the cause of his flight: and he said to them, "Why do you wonder at my flight, heeding not the cause? I fled to the protection of prayer that I might deliver the erring one. I saw in my son that which gave [me] just displeasure: but lo! now by the grace of my Christ all his delusion

has departed." The brother fell on his knees and with shame owned himself guilty. "The Lord forgive thee, brother," said the Saint, "but beware in future of withdrawing from thy Religion and from the brethren under an appearance of holiness." Accordingly the said brother became a friend of the Congregation and Fellowship, being especially attached to those communities wherein the observance of the Rule thrives most.

O how great are the works of the Lord in the council and assembly of the righteous! For therein those molested [by temptation] are restrained, the crushed are raised up, the lukewarm are aroused, therein "iron sharpeneth iron," and brother helped by brother is established like a strong city. And though thou cannot see Jesus for the worldly throng, the angelic throng of heaven in nowise hinders thee. Only fly not, and being faithful unto death thou shalt receive the crown of life.

Another similar case

34. Shortly afterwards something of the same sort happened in the case of another. One of the brethren would not submit to the Saint's Vicar but followed another brother as his own superior. But after that the Saint, who was present, had admonished him through a messenger, he threw himself straightway at the Vicar's feet, set at nought his first superior, and obeyed the one whom the Saint had appointed for him. But the Saint sighed deeply and said to his companion (the messenger whom he had sent): "Brother, I saw a devil on the disobedient brother's

back, clutching him by the neck. He had despised the curb of obedience and was following the reins of the rider's impulses by whom he had been subdued. And (he added) when I prayed the Lord for that brother, suddenly the devil departed in confusion." This man's sight was such that though for bodily things his eyes were weak, for spiritual they were acute.

And what wonder if he who will not bear the Lord of Majesty is weighed down by a shameful burden? There is no middle course, I say: Either thou shalt bear a light burden (whereby rather thou shalt be borne), or else wickedness, heavier than a talent of lead,[1] shall sit [on thee], a great mill-stone hanging about thy neck.

CHAPTER VII

How he delivered the men of Greccio from wolves and from hail

35. THE Saint was fond of staying in the "place" of the brethren of Greccio, both because he saw that it was rich in poverty and because in a secluded cell hewn out of a projecting rock he could more freely devote himself to heavenly discipline. (This is the place wherein long ago he revived the birthday of the Child of Bethlehem, becoming a child with the Child.) Now it came to pass that the inhabitants were being plagued with manifold evils: for a multitude of ravening wolves were devouring

[1] See Zech. v. 7, 8.

not only brutes but men, and yearly storms of hail were laying waste the cornfields and vineyards. But one day, as S. Francis was preaching to them, he said: "To the honour and praise of Almighty God, listen to the truth which I announce to you. If each one of you confesses his sins and brings forth worthy fruits of penitence, I pledge my word to you that this plague shall wholly depart, and that the Lord shall look upon you and multiply you in temporal goods. But hear this also: Again I announce to you that if ye shall be ungrateful for His benefits and return to your vomit, the plague shall be renewed, the punishment doubled, and greater wrath shall prevail against you." (36) And so by the holy father's merits and prayers it came to pass that from that hour the destruction ceased, the dangers passed away, nor did wolves nor hail cause any further mischief. Nay, what is more, whenever hail came over their neighbours' land, as it approached their own borders it either ceased there or passed off elsewhere. Repose having been granted them they were multiplied exceedingly and filled exceedingly with temporal goods. But prosperity did what it is wont to do: for their faces became covered with the grossness and fat of temporal things, or rather, they were blinded with dung. At last they fell back into worse, and forgot God who had saved them; but not with impunity, for God's judgment punishes the lapsed less heavily than the relapsed. The fury of God was aroused against them, and the evils that had departed returned, and there was added to them the sword of man; a pestilence ordained from heaven consumed very

many of the people, and at length the whole fortress was burnt up with avenging flames.

Verily it is just that those who turn their backs on benefits should come to destruction.

CHAPTER VIII

How in preaching to the Perugians he foretold that there would be sedition among them: and of his commendation of unity

37. SOME days afterwards, while the blessed father was once coming down from the aforesaid cell, he said in mournful tones to the brethren who were present: "The men of Perugia have done much evil to their neighbours, and their heart is lifted up, which shall be for their ignominy. But the vengeance of the Lord is nigh: and His hand is on His sword." And a few days later he arose in fervour of spirit, and turned his course toward Perugia. The brethren might [therefore] surely take it that he had seen some vision in the cell. So when he came to Perugia he began to preach to the assembled people; but when the knights (after their manner) rode up armed and hindered the Word of God with warlike sports, he turned to them, and said with groaning: "O wretched men, pitiable is your folly in not heeding nor fearing God's judgment! But hear what the Lord announces to you by me, the little poor man. The Lord hath exalted you above all that are round about you; wherefore ye ought to be kinder to your neighbours, and more thankful to God; but, unthankful for favour, you attack, kill and plunder your neighbours with

armed hand. I tell you this shall not be left unpunished, and for your heavier punishment God shall make you fall by intestine war, so that one shall rise up against another in mutual sedition. Wrath shall teach those whom kindness has not instructed."

Not many days later discord arose among them; neighbours took up arms against neighbours, the burghers attacked the knights, the nobles in their turn fell upon the plebeians; and at last they fought with such fury, and there was such slaughter, that the very neighbours around, whom they had wronged, grieved with them.

A judgment worthy of praise! for, since they had withdrawn from the One Supreme, it was impossible that unity should remain among them. There can be no stronger bond in a state than duteous love to God, and faith sincere and unfeigned.

CHAPTER IX

Of the woman to whom he foretold that her bad husband would become good

38. IN those days when the man of God was on his way to Cella di Cortona a noble woman of the fortress called Volusiano heard of it, and hastened to go to him. At length she came to him, wearied with the long journey (for she was very delicate and tender), and when the most holy father saw her tired and panting he pitied her, and said: "What is thy pleasure, lady?" She answered: "Father, that thou wouldst bless me". And he asked: "Art thou married or

unmarried?" "Father," she replied, "I have a very cruel husband who is an adversary to me in serving Jesus Christ, and my greatest grief is that I cannot perform the good will wherewith the Lord has inspired me, because my husband hinders me; wherefore I beseech thee, holy man, pray for him that God's mercy may soften his heart." The father wondered to see a man's spirit in a woman, the wisdom of the aged in a girl, and moved by pity, said: "Go, blessed daughter, and know that thou shalt soon have consolation of thy husband". And he added: "Tell him on God's behalf and on mine that now is the time of salvation, and afterwards that of justice". Having received this blessing the woman returned home, found her husband and told him these words. Forthwith the Holy Ghost fell upon him and caused him, having been changed from the old into a new man, with all gentleness to answer: "Lady, let us serve God and save our souls in our own house". His wife replied: "It seems to me that continence should be laid in the soul like a foundation and that the other virtues should afterwards be built upon it". "And this," he said, "is as pleasing to me as to thee." Thereafter they led a celibate life for a good many years and happily departed on the same day, one as a morning holocaust, the other as an evening sacrifice.

Happy woman thus to soften her lord unto life! In her is fulfilled the Apostle's saying: "The unbelieving husband hath been saved by the believing wife". But such (to use a common expression) may be counted on one's fingers nowadays.

CHAPTER X

How he knew by the spirit that one brother had caused scandal to another, and foretold that the former would quit the Religion

39. TWO brethren came once from Terra di Lavoro the elder of whom caused much scandal to the younger. He was, I say, not a companion but a tyrant. But the younger bore it all in silence for God's sake. Now when they had reached Assisi and the younger had gone in to S. Francis (for he was intimate with him) the Saint said among other things, "How has thy companion behaved toward thee on this journey?" "Oh, very well, dearest father," was the answer. "Beware, brother," replied the Saint, "of telling a lie from false humility: for I know how he has been behaving toward thee. But wait a little and thou shalt see." (The brother wondered very much how S. Francis could have known in the spirit what had been passing at such a distance.) Accordingly after a few days the brother who had scandalized his companion set at naught the Order, and was expelled.

It is an undoubted token of perverseness and an evident proof of failing sense not to be of the same mind with a good companion when one is going on the same way with him.

CHAPTER XI

Of a lad who came to enter the Religion, but whom the Saint knew to be not led by the Spirit of God

40. IN those days a boy of Lucca, of noble birth, came to Assisi wishing to enter the Religion. He was presented to S. Francis, and on bended knees prayed him with tears to receive him. But the man of God looked upon him, and immediately knew by the Spirit that he was not being driven by the Spirit, and said to him: "Unhappy and carnal boy, why dost thou trust in being able to lie to the Holy Spirit and to me? Thy weeping is carnal, and thy heart is not with God. Go, for thou savourest nothing spiritually." Hereupon it was announced that the boy's parents were at the door, seeking to take their son and fetch him home with them. So the boy went out to them and was persuaded at last to return of his own accord. But the brethren wondered and praised the Lord in His Saint.

CHAPTER XII

Of a clerk whom S. Francis healed and to whom he foretold that he would suffer worse if he sinned again

41. AT the time when the holy father lay sick in the palace of the Bishop of Rieti a certain dissolute and worldly canon named Gideon had been seized with illness and lay in bed compassed about on

every side with pains. He had himself carried before S. Francis and begged him with tears to sign him with the sign of the Cross. But S. Francis said to him, "Since thou hast lived in the past according to the desires of the flesh without fearing God's judgments, how shall I sign thee with the Cross?" Then he said: "I sign thee in Christ's name; but know that if after having been delivered, thou return to thy vomit, thou shalt suffer heavier things". And he continued: "For the sin of ingratitude worse things than the former are ever added". So he made the sign of the Cross over him, and forthwith he who had been bowed together rose up whole, and cried, breaking forth into praise, "I am set free". (Now the bones of his loins, in the hearing of many, made a noise like that of dry pieces of wood broken by the hand.) But after a short time he forgot God and returned to unchastity of body: and one evening when after supper he was sleeping at the house of one of his fellow-canons, the roof suddenly fell in on all the company; the others all escaped death, and that wretched man alone was cut off, and perished. Nor is it wonderful if (as the Saint said) worse evils than the former came upon him; since one ought to be thankful for forgiveness received; and wrongdoing repeated is a double offence.

CHAPTER XIII

Of a certain tempted brother

42. WHILE the Saint was staying at the same place a certain spiritual brother (of the Custody[1] of Marsica), who was vexed with grievous temptations, said in his heart: "Oh, if ever I could have with me some—even if only a few—of the parings of holy Francis' nails, I believe that all this storm of temptations would disperse, and peace return, by the Lord's favour". So, having obtained permission, he repaired to the place and set forth his case to one of the holy father's companions. This brother answered: "I do not think I can possibly give thee any of his nails; for, though we cut them for him sometimes, he orders the parings to be thrown away and forbids us to keep them". Forthwith that brother was sent for, and ordered to go to the Saint, who was asking for him; and S. Francis said to him: "Find me scissors, my son, to cut my nails with at once!" The brother handed the scissors, which he had already taken up for that purpose, picked up the parings, and gave them to the brother who had asked for them; and that brother, having received them devoutly, kept them still more devoutly, and was immediately delivered from every assault.

[1] *I.e.*, a district comprising a group of convents, under the jurisdiction of a "Custos". The district lay in the extreme South of the Abruzzi.

CHAPTER XIV

Of a man who offered cloth such as the Saint had asked for before

43. AT the same place the father of the poor was wearing a shabby old tunic, and one day he said to one of his companions whom he had appointed his warden: "I would, brother, that, if thou couldst, thou wouldst find me some cloth for a tunic". The brother, on hearing this, cast about in his mind how he might come by the cloth which was so necessary and had been so humbly asked for; and next morning at dawn he went to the gate intending to go to the village for the cloth, and by the door he found a man sitting who wanted to speak to him, and he said to that brother, "Do, for the love of God, accept from me cloth for six tunics. Keep one for thyself, and distribute the rest as it pleases thee, for the benefit of my soul!" The brother, filled with joy, returned to brother Francis, and told him of the offering made from heaven; and Francis said: "Accept the tunics, for the man has been sent [hither] that he might in such wise supply my need," adding: "Thanks be to Him who seems to take thought for us alone!"

CHAPTER XV

How he invited his physician to dinner when the brethren had nothing to eat; how the Lord suddenly supplied him plentifully; and of God's watchful care of His own.

44. WHILE the blessed man was staying in a certain hermitage by Rieti a physician used to visit him daily for the cure of his eyes. But

one day the Saint said to his companions, "Invite the doctor, and give him a very good dinner". The warden answered, "Father, we blush to say it, we are ashamed to invite him, so poor are we now". "Why do you want me to tell you again?" answered the Saint. The doctor, who was standing by, said, "As for me, dearest brethren, I shall take your penury for delicacies". The brethren made haste and put the whole abundance of their store on the table, that is to say, a little bread and not much wine; and in order that the fare might be more sumptuous, the kitchen furnished a few vegetables. Meantime the table of God was taking pity on that of His servants. There was a knock at the door. It was answered forthwith and see! there was a woman presenting a basket full of fine bread, fish and pasties of crayfish, and heaped up with honey and grapes. There was joy at this sight round the table of the poor; and, keeping the common food for the morrow, they ate the dainties that day. But the doctor said with a sigh, "Brethren, neither do ye know this man's holiness as ye ought, nor do we of the world know it".

Finally, the miracle satisfied them more than the banquet; else had they not been satisfied. Even so that Father's eye never despises His children; but rather when they are beggars in the greatest need does a richer Providence feed them. And by how much God's bounty is more lavish than man's, by so much is the poor man fed at a more bountiful table than the tyrant.[1]

[1] The "Marseilles" MS. here inserts (with no material difference) the story of brother Ricerio related above, I., 49, 50.

CHAPTER XVI

Of the two brethren whom he came out of his cell to bless, knowing their desire through the Spirit

45. IT was S. Francis' custom to pass the whole day in his cell alone, and not to come back to the brethren until compelled by the need of taking food. Nor used he to come out at the fixed meal-times; for more often than not he was wholly mastered by a greater craving for contemplation. Now, it happened once that two brethren of godly conversation came, to the "place" at Greccio from a long distance, the whole cause of their coming being their desire to see the holy man and to receive his long-coveted blessing. So when they arrived, and did not find him (for he had already retired from public view into his cell) they were wondrously afflicted, and, since the uncertainty concerning his return would impose on them a long delay, they withdrew in great sorrow, attributing their disappointment to their unworthiness, and followed by blessed Francis' companions, who tried to comfort them in their desolation. But when they were gone about a stone's cast from the "place" suddenly the holy man cried after them, and said to one of his companions: "Tell my brethren who are come hither to look back at me" And when the said brethren had turned their faces toward him he made the sign of the Cross over them, and affectionately blessed them. And they went back on their way praising and blessing the Lord, being the more joyful in that they had not only

accomplished their purpose but obtained the greater advantage of a miracle.

CHAPTER XVII

How by prayer he brought water out of a rock and gave it to a thirsting peasant

46. ONCE, when S. Francis would go to a certain hermitage in order there to give himself more freely to contemplation, he borrowed from a poor man an ass to ride on, for he was very weak. It was in summer, and as the countryman followed the man of God up the mountain he became weary by reason of the length and steepness of the way, and before they reached the place he sank down, exhausted by parching thirst. He cried urgently after the Saint and begged him to take pity on him, saying that he should die unless he could be refreshed by the benefit of some drink. Without delay the Saint of God (who always pitied the distressed) dismounted, and fell on his knees, stretching up the palms of his hands to heaven, nor did he cease to pray until he felt that he had been heard. "Make haste," said he to the countryman, "and yonder thou wilt find water which Christ in mercy has brought to thee at this hour out of the stone to drink." O amazing condescension of God, which so readily bows down to His servants! The peasant drank water from the crag by the power of him who had prayed, and drained a draught out of the hardest rock. Water had never flowed there before, nor could any be found afterwards, as diligent search has proved. What wonder if a man

full of the Holy Ghost, should show forth again in himself the wondrous deeds of all the righteous? For when a man is joined to Christ by a gift of special grace it is no great thing if he performs works like those of the other Saints.

CHAPTER XVIII

Of the birds he fed, and how one of them perished through greed

47. ONE day blessed Francis was sitting at table with the brethren, when two little birds, cock and hen, came up, eager about the bringing-up of their new-born chicks, and took away crumbs as they liked from the holy man's table. So they did every day afterwards. The holy man, who took pleasure in such creatures, made them welcome (as he was wont), and offered them grain [which he had got] on purpose. One day the father and mother offered their chicks to the brethren, as having been reared at their cost; and having made them over, did not appear in that place any more. The young birds became very familiar with the brethren; they would sit on their hands, and dwelt in the house, not as guests but as if they were at home. They shunned the sight of lay-folk, and professed themselves nurslings of the brethren only.

The Saint observed this with astonishment, and invited the brethren to rejoice: "Look," said he, "at what our brothers the redbreasts have done: just as if they were gifted with reason! For they have said: 'See, brothers, we present you with our chicks who have been fed with your crumbs: do with them

what you will. We betake ourselves to another home.'" So the little birds made themselves quite at home with the brethren, and took their food peaceably. But greed broke up their concord, for the biggest got uplifted and persecuted the smaller ones; for when he had eaten as much as he wanted, he drove the rest away from the food. "See," said S. Francis, "what this greedy bird is doing. Though full and satisfied himself, he grudges against his hungry brothers: he will come to a bad end yet!" The punishment followed instantly on the words of the Saint. The disturber of his brethren went up on a vessel of water to drink, and immediately fell in and was drowned; nor was any cat or other beast found who durst touch the creature cursed by the Saint. Horrible indeed is greed in men when it is thus punished in birds! Moreover the sentence of the Saints should be feared, when punishment follows so close upon it.

CHAPTER XIX

How all his predictions about brother Bernard were fulfilled

48. AT another time he spoke prophetically thus concerning brother Bernard who had been the second to enter the Order: "I tell you that there have been assigned to brother Bernard, to try him, the most subtle devils, and spirits more wicked than the rest; but though they are ever eagerly watching how they may make the star fall from the sky, the thing shall turn out otherwise: he shall be troubled, tormented, afflicted, but at last he shall triumph over all."

And he added: "At his death, when all the storms have cleared away and every temptation has been overcome he shall enjoy wondrous calm and peace, and, having finished his course, shall happily pass to Christ". And so indeed it was: his death was lit up by miracles: and the man of God's prediction was fulfilled to the letter. Accordingly the brethren said when he died: "Truly that brother was not known, while he lived". But we leave this Bernard's praises to be told by others.

CHAPTER XX

Of a tempted brother who would have some writing from the Saint's hand

49. WHILE the Saint abode shut up in a cell on the mountain of La Verna, one of his companions longed with great desire to have for his refreshment a writing of words of the Lord briefly annotated by S. Francis' hand. For he thought thereby to escape, or at least to endure more easily, a grievous temptation (not of the flesh but of the spirit) by which he was molested. Though languishing with his desire he feared to open the matter to the most holy father, but the Spirit revealed it to him, though man told him not. And one day blessed Francis called him, and said: "Bring me paper and ink, for I will write down words of God and His praises, which I have pondered in my heart". The materials he had asked for were brought forthwith, and with his own hand he wrote the praises of God and the words he chose to

write, and lastly a blessing for that brother, saying: "Take this paper, and keep it diligently till the day of thy death". Immediately all that temptation was put to flight; the writing was preserved, and afterwards wrought wondrous things.[1]

CHAPTER XXI

Of that same brother, whose desire he fulfilled by giving him his tunic

50. ANOTHER thing was wondrously done for that same brother by the holy father: for while he lay sick in the palace at Assisi the said brother said to himself: "The father's death is approaching, and my soul would be exceedingly comforted if I might have my father's tunic after his death". As though his heart's desire had been his mouth's request, blessed Francis called him after a little while and said: "I make over to thee this tunic, accept it, that it may henceforth be thine. And though I wear it while I am alive, yet be it thine at my death." That brother wondered at the father's insight and was comforted at last by receiving the tunic: and afterwards holy devotion carried it into France.

[1] An account of this writing, with facsimile, will be found in R. Balfour's *The Seraphic Keepsake* (Burns & Oates). The brother to whom it was given was Leo.

CHAPTER XXII

Of the parsley which at his command was found by night among wild herbs

51. ONE night towards the end of his last sickness [the blessed Francis] desired to eat some parsley, and humbly asked for it. When the cook was called to bring it, he answered that he could not then gather any in the garden, and said: "I have been picking parsley every day, and have gathered so much that I could scarce find any more even by daylight, and how much less could I distinguish it from other herbs now that it is dark?" "Go, brother," said the Saint, "never mind, and bring the first herbs thou touchest." The brother went into the garden, picked the wild herbs which first came to hand, for he saw nothing, and brought them to the house. The brethren looked at the wild herbs, turned them over carefully, and found among them a tender leafy bit of parsley, of which the Saint ate a little, and was greatly comforted. And the father said to the brethren: "My brethren, obey orders at once, and do not wait for them to be repeated; and do not allege that anything is impossible, for even were I to bid you do anything beyond your strength, obedience would not be wanting in strength."

Thus far the spirit of prophecy has spoken for the spiritual privilege [he enjoyed].

CHAPTER XXIII

Of the famine which he foretold would come after his death

52. HOLY men are sometimes compelled by impulse of the Holy Ghost to utter wondrous things about themselves; that is to say, either when God's glory requires such a revelation to be made, or when the law of charity demands it for the edification of their neighbour. Hence it is that one day the blessed father imparted to one of the brethren whom he greatly loved this word which he had at that time brought from the council-chamber (familiar to him) of the Divine Majesty: "To-day there is on the earth a servant of God for whose sake as long as he shall live God will not allow famine to rage against men".

Here was no vanity, but a holy recital which for our edification holy Charity, she that "seeketh not her own," uttered in holy, modest words: nor was the privilege of such wondrous love shown by Christ toward His servant to be passed over in unprofitable silence. For all we who were witnesses of it know how quietly and peacefully the times passed during which the servant of Christ lived, and how they abounded in fruitfulness of all good things. For there was no famine of God's word at that time when the preachers' words were most full of power and all the hearers' hearts were most acceptable to God. Patterns of holiness shone forth in religious semblance:[1] the hypocrisy of whited men had not yet tainted so many holy

[1] *I.e.*, under the habit of the Order.

ones, nor had the learning of dissemblers brought in such nicety. Temporal goods therefore deservedly abounded, since the eternal were so truly beloved by all.

53. Accordingly when he was removed the state of things was utterly reversed, and all was changed: for wars and seditions prevailed everywhere, and many kingdoms were suddenly laid low by divers kinds of death. Moreover, the horror of famine spread far and wide, whose cruelty, surpassing all other bitternesses, consumed very many. For need then turned everything into food, and compelled human teeth to chew things that brutes were not wont to eat. Accordingly nutshells and the bark of trees were made into bread; and, to use the gentlest expression, a father's tenderness, urged by famine, grieved not for a child's death; as became manifest by the confession of a certain man. But that it may appear more plainly who that faithful servant was, for whose sake Divine chastisement stayed its hand from vengeance, the blessed father Francis a few days after his death plainly revealed to that same brother to whom he had foretold when alive the destruction to come, that he was that servant of God. For one night, when that brother was sleeping, S. Francis called him with clear voice, saying: "Brother, now is coming the famine which, so long as I was alive, God did not suffer to come on the earth". The brother awoke at these words and afterwards related the whole in order. Three nights afterwards the Saint appeared to him a second time and uttered similar words.

CHAPTER XXIV

Of the Saint's splendour, and of our ignorance

54. IT should seem strange to none if the prophet of our time shone with such privileges as these; in fact, being loosed from the darkness of earthly things and not subdued by the pleasure of the flesh, his mind being free flew to the highest, and being pure entered into the light. Thus, illumined by the flashes of eternal light, he derived from the Word that which sounded in [his own] words. Ah! how unlike him are we to-day who are wrapped in darkness and ignorant even of necessary things! Wherefore, think you, unless because we, being friends of the flesh, are ourselves also planted in the dust of worldliness? But if we would "lift up our hearts with our hands to heaven," if we would choose to hang on the things that are eternal, we should perhaps know what now we do not know—God and ourselves. He who dwells in the mire must needs see the mire: he whose eye is fixed on heaven cannot but see heavenly things.

OF POVERTY

CHAPTER XXV

Of Poverty and the praise of her

55. PLACED in the vale of tears, that blessed father set at naught the common paltry wealth of the sons of men, and in his ambition to attain a more exalted height longed after Poverty with

all his heart. Considering that she was the familiar friend of the Son of God, he strove in perpetual charity to espouse her, now that she was cast off by all the world. Therefore having become a lover of her beauty, in order that he might cleave yet closer to her as his wife, and that they two might be united in one spirit, not only did he leave his father and his mother, but even put all things from him. Therefore, he clasped her with chaste embraces, nor for an hour did he endure not to be her husband.

He would tell his sons that she was the way of perfection, that she was the pledge and earnest of eternal riches. No one was so greedy of gold as he of Poverty, no one more careful in guarding a treasure than he in guarding this pearl of the Gospel. Herein especially was his sight offended, if he saw in the brethren anything either at home or abroad contrary to poverty. Verily, he himself from the beginning of the Religion till his death was rich in a tunic only, a cord, and drawers, and had naught else. His poor habit showed where he was laying up his riches. Deriving hence gladness, confidence and freedom to run his course, he rejoiced in having exchanged perishable treasures for one a hundredfold greater.

CHAPTER XXVI

Of poverty in dwellings

56. HE taught his brethren to make poor habitations, of wood, not of stone, and to build them as small houses on a humble plan. And often

when talking of poverty he would urge on the brethren that Gospel saying: "The foxes have holes and the birds of the sky have nests: but the Son of God had not where to lay His head".

CHAPTER XXVII

Of the house at Portiuncula which he began to destroy

57. ONCE when a chapter was to be held at S. Maria de Portiuncula, and the time was at hand, the people of Assisi, observing that there was no house there, in the man of God's absence and without his knowledge built with the utmost speed a house for the chapter to be held in. At length on his return he saw the house, and being deeply displeased, complained in no gentle tones. Presently he arose, the foremost to demolish the building, got upon the roof, and with strong hand tore down the slates and tiles. He bade the brethren also come up and remove that monstrous thing, far opposed to Poverty; for he said that anything savouring of arrogance that was seen in that place would quickly spread through the Order, and be taken by all as an example. Therefore he would have utterly destroyed that house if certain knights who were present had not resisted the fervour of his spirit by declaring that it belonged to the State, and not to the brethren.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Of the house at Bologna from which he drove out the sick

58. ONCE when S. Francis was returning from Verona, and was intending to go through Bologna, he was told "that a house of the brethren had just been built there". No sooner did he hear the words "a house of the brethren" than he turned aside and passed onward another way without going to Bologna. Furthermore he ordered all the brethren to leave the house with haste, in consequence of which, when the house was quitted, even the sick were not left behind, but turned out with the rest. Nor were they allowed to go back until the Lord Hugo (then Bishop of Ostia and Legate in Lombardy) had made it publicly known that the house belonged to him. He who was then turned out of the house sick bears witness to these things and writes them down.

CHAPTER XXIX

Of his refusing to enter a cell to which his name had been put

59. HE would not let the brethren live in any dwelling, even a small one, unless it were sure that there was some owner to whom the property belonged; for he always aimed at his sons' observing the laws of pilgrims—namely, to be gathered under another's roof, to pass onward peaceably, and to thirst after their native land. So even in the hermitage of Sartiano, when one brother asked another where he

was coming from, and the answer was "From brother Francis' cell," the Saint, on hearing it, replied: "Since thou hast put Francis' name to the cell, appropriating it to me, look out for another inhabitant for it, for I will not stay in it any more. The Lord (he said) when He was in the wilderness where He prayed and fasted forty days did not have a cell made there, nor any house, but abode beneath a rock of the mountain. We may follow Him in the manner enjoined by having nothing in the way of property; though we cannot live without having the use of houses."

CHAPTER XXX

Of poverty in furniture

60. NOT only did this man hate arrogance in respect of houses, but he had the utmost abhorrence of many or choice articles of furniture. He loved nothing in tables or vessels which might remind him of the world; to the end that everything might sing of pilgrimage and exile.

CHAPTER XXXI

Ensample[1] concerning the table prepared at Greccio on Easter day, and how after Christ's example he showed himself in a pilgrim's guise

61. ONE Easter day the brethren at the hermitage of Greccio laid the table more carefully than usual, with white table-linen and glass vessels.

[1] An "ensample" in mediæval phraseology is a moral tale.

The father came down from the cell, went to the table, and noticed that it was placed on high, and decked in vain fashion. But on the smiling table he by no means smiled. Stealthily and gradually he withdrew, put on his head the hat of a poor man who was there, and went out of doors, carrying a staff in his hand. He waited outside at the door for the brethren to begin; for they used not to wait for him when he did not come at the signal. When they began to eat, that true poor man cried at the door: "For the love of the Lord God give alms to this poor sick pilgrim". The brethren answered: "Come in, good man, for the love of Him whom thou hast invoked". He came in at once, and appeared before them as they were eating. What, think you, was the amazement the pilgrim caused to the inhabitants? They gave him a dish, at his request, and, sitting alone on the ground [by the fire], he made the ashes his table, saying, "*Now* I am sitting like a Lesser Brother"; then to the brethren: "The example of the poverty of the Son of God should constrain us more than any other Religious. I saw a table spread and adorned, and knew that it was not the table of poor men who go from door to door." The method of his action proves that he was like that Stranger who was "alone"[1] in Jerusalem on that day: but yet he made the disciples' hearts burn, while he was speaking.

[1] See Luke xxiv. 18.

CHAPTER XXXII

Against curiosity in books

62. HE taught that the testimony of God rather than value, and edification rather than beauty, should be sought in books. Still, he wished that a few should be kept, and that they should be adapted to the requirements of needy brethren: and so when a certain Minister asked that certain ambitious and very valuable books might be kept by his permission, this was what he heard in reply: "I am not going to lose the book of the Gospel, which I have promised to obey, for the sake of thy books. Do however what thou wilt: my permission shall not be made a snare."

OF POVERTY IN BEDS

CHAPTER XXXIII

An ensample of the Lord of Ostia. His praise

63. FINALLY, in couches and beds plenteous poverty so abounded that he who had a few torn rags over some straw deemed it a marriage-bed. Accordingly when a chapter was being held at S. Maria de Portiuncula, and the Lord of Ostia with a throng of knights and clerks came there to visit the brethren, on seeing how the brethren lay on the ground and noticing their beds, which you might take for the lairs of wild beasts, "Look," said he, before all the company, bitterly weeping, "this is where the brethren sleep!" And he added, "But what will become of us

wretches who use up so many superfluities?" All the bystanders were moved even to tears and went away greatly edified. This was that Cardinal of Ostia who when he was at last made the greatest door (*ostium*) in the Church ever resisted her foes (*hostes*) until he returned that blessed soul of his as a sacred victim (*hostia*) to heaven. O pious breast! O bowels of charity! When placed on high he grieved that he had no high merits, when in fact he was loftier in virtue than in station.

CHAPTER XXXIV

What happened to S. Francis one night for using a feather-pillow

64. SINCE we have made mention of beds, another incident occurs to us which it might be profitable to relate. From the time when this Saint turned to Christ, and delivered to forgetfulness the things that are of the world, he would not lie under a coverlet, nor have a feather-pillow at his head. Neither sickness nor strangers' hospitality suspended this restriction. But it happened that at the hermitage of Greccio, when he was suffering more than usual from the infirmity of his eyes, he was compelled, against his will, to use a small pillow. At matins on the first night the Saint called his companion and said to him: "Brother, I have not been able to sleep to-night, nor to remain upright for prayer; my head trembles, my knees sink under me, and my whole body is out of gear, just as if I had eaten bread made of darnel. I believe the Devil is in this pillow that I have at my

head : take it away, for I won't have the Devil at my head any longer." His companion, sympathising with the father's querulous murmur, caught the pillow, which he had thrown at him, to carry it away. So he went out, and immediately lost the power of speech, and was oppressed and bound by such horror that he could neither move his feet from the spot, nor in any wise move his arms. After a little the Saint, who knew what had happened, called him, and he was set free. He came back, and told what he had suffered. And the Saint said to him : "Last evening when I was saying compline I clearly knew that the Devil was coming to the cell". And again, "Very crafty and subtle is our foe, for, when he cannot hurt us in the soul within, at least he gives the body matter for murmuring."

Let those hearken who prepare pillows on every side, so that whichever way they fall they may be caught gently. The Devil gladly follows opulence, he likes to take his stand by costly beds, especially where there is no compulsion of necessity, and the profession forbids such things. None the less does the old serpent fly from a naked man,[1] either because he despises the company of the poor, or because he fears the height of Poverty. If a friar gives heed that a devil lurks in feathers, he will be content to have straw at his head.

[1] Allusion to a popular belief in the Middle Ages. *E.g.*, in a Provençal summary of Natural History we read that when a viper sees a man naked it dares not look at him for fear, but when it sees him clothed it does not mind him at all and jumps up on him (Bartsch, Chrestomathie Provençale, 334).

ON ENSAMPLES AGAINST MONEY

CHAPTER XXXV

Sharp correction of a brother who touched it with his hand

65. NOW that great friend of God, despising all things that are of the world, beyond everything else execrated money. Hence even from the beginning of his conversion he held it in special contempt, and always intimated to his followers that they must fly from it as from the Devil himself. This was the motto he gave them: "Let dung and money be loved and valued alike". One day accordingly a certain layman came into the church of S. Maria de Portiuncula to pray, and put down near the cross some money for an offering. When he withdrew, one of the brethren simply touched it with his hand and threw it on the window-sill. The Saint heard of what the brother had done: and the brother, seeing that he was found out, ran to beg for pardon, and, falling on the ground, offered to submit to stripes. The Saint rebuked him, and after chiding him most severely for having touched the money bade him remove it in his mouth from the window-sill, and with his mouth lay it on asses' dung outside the precincts: and while that brother gladly obeyed this command, the hearts of all that heard of it were filled with fear. Thenceforth the contempt of all for what had thus been put on the same footing as dung was increased, and they were daily encouraged by fresh examples to despise it.

CHAPTER XXXVI

Punishment of a brother for picking up money

66. AS two brethren were walking together, they came near a lepers' hospital, and finding some money on the road, they halted, and discussed what should be done with such dung. One of them, laughing at his brother's conscience, wanted to take the money as an offering for leprous servants of Mammon.[1] His companion forbade him, saying that he was misled by false piety, and urging upon the rash brother the words of the Rule, whence it is very clear that money found is to be trampled on like dust. The other hardened his mind against the warning (for he was ever habitually stiff-necked), despised the Rule, bent down, and took the money. But he did not escape God's judgment. Immediately he was deprived of speech; he gnashed with his teeth and could frame no words. And so did punishment proclaim the fool, so did retribution teach the arrogant one to obey the father's laws. At last he threw the foul stuff away, and his polluted lips, washed with the waters of penitence, were unloosed in praise.

There is an old proverb, "Correct a fool and he will be a friend".

[1] *Leprosis pecuniæ famulis.* This expression is very curious and difficult. The Rev. P. H. Wicksteed suggests that it may mean servants of the world, *i.e.*, persons outside the "Order," afflicted with leprosy.

CHAPTER XXXVII

A brother chidden who wished to keep money on the plea of necessity

67. ONCE, when brother Peter Cathanii (the Saint's vicar) saw that S. Maria de Portiuncula was crowded by brethren from distant parts, and that the alms were not enough to provide them with necessaries, he said to S. Francis: "I know not, brother, what I am to do, for I have not wherewith to provide sufficiently for the crowd of brethren coming together from every quarter. I pray thee to allow somewhat of the property of novices entering the Order to be reserved, so that recourse may be had to it in time of need." The holy man answered: "Away with such piety, dearest brother, as that of acting impiously against the Rule for the sake of any one whomsoever!" "What am I to do, then?" said the other. "Strip the Virgin's altar," replied S. Francis, "and take away its various ornaments, since thou canst not help the needy in any other way. Believe me, she will be better pleased to have her Son's Gospel observed and her altar stript, than to have the altar vested and her Son despised. The Lord will send some one to restore to His Mother what He has lent us."

CHAPTER XXXVIII

Of money turned into a snake

68. WHEN the man of God was once passing through Apulia with a companion he found in the way near Bari a large purse, called in merchants' language *fionda* (a sling), stuffed with coin. The Saint's companion advised him and urgently pressed him to take up the purse, and give the money to the poor; extolling the virtue of pity towards the needy, and praising the mercy which would be shown by spending the money thus. The Saint absolutely refused to do it, declaring that it was a trick of the Devil. "My son," said he, "it is not lawful to take away the property of others; and to give away what belongs to others involves punishment for sin, not honour for merit." So they left the spot and hastened to finish their journey. However, that brother, deluded by a vain compassion, was not satisfied; and continued to suggest transgression. The Saint consented to return to the place, not indeed to comply with the brother's wish, but to show to the fool a Divine mystery. He called a lad who was sitting on a well by the way, that "in the mouth of two or three witnesses" the Sacrament of the Trinity[1] might be manifest. So the three came back to the purse and saw it stuffed with coins. The Saint forbad either of the others to come near, in order that the Devil's deceit might be disclosed by the power of prayer: and then he withdrew about a stone's cast and applied himself to holy prayer. On his return from prayer he bade the

[1] *I.e.*, the working of the Triune God.

brother take up the purse (which, through his prayer, contained a snake instead of money). The brother trembled and was amazed, and already, feeling some foreboding, his thoughts were changed from what they had been before. At last he drove away his hesitation of heart by the fear of holy obedience and took the purse in his hands; when lo! a large serpent leapt out of the purse and showed that brother how the Devil had deceived him. Then said the Saint to him: "To God's servants, brother, money is nothing else but a devil and a venomous snake".

CHAPTER XXXIX

Of poverty in dress

69. THIS man, "endued with power from on high," was rather warmed inwardly by the Divine fire, than outwardly by the bodily covering. He execrated those in the Order who wore three garments and used soft clothing except of necessity. He declared that when pleasure and not reason was the index of necessity, it was the sign of a quenched spirit. "For," said he, "when the spirit is lukewarm and gradually growing cold in grace, the flesh and blood must needs seek their own. For when the soul finds no delight (he said), what remains but that the flesh should turn to its own delight? And then the animal appetite puts forward the palliation of necessity; then the feelings of the flesh fashion the conscience." And he would add, "Suppose our brother is truly in need, suppose he feels any want; if he

hastens to satisfy himself, and to put the need far from him, what reward shall he receive? He had an opportunity of deserving well, but deliberately proved that he did not like to profit by it." With these and the like words would he pierce those who were unfamiliar with necessities: since not to endure them patiently is nothing else but to turn back to Egypt.

In short, on no occasion would he let the brethren have more than two tunics, which however he allowed them to patch with pieces sewn on. He bade them have a horror of choice clothing, and those who were disobedient in this matter he most sternly reprimanded before all. In order to confound such by his own example he sewed sackcloth over his own coarse tunic: and even at his death asked that his funeral tunic should be covered with common sackcloth. But he allowed the brethren under stress of sickness or other need a soft tunic next the skin, provided that the habit preserved its roughness and coarseness outside. For he would say: "Rigour shall yet be so relaxed, lukewarmness shall yet so prevail that the sons of the poor father will not be at all ashamed to wear even scarlet array, changing the colour only".

We thy alien children do not belie thee herein, O father, but our iniquity rather belies itself, for lo! it is now clearer than the light and is increasing day by day.

CHAPTER XL

He pronounces that those who withdraw from Poverty must needs be punished

70. SOMETIMES also he would repeat these words: "In proportion as the brethren shall decline from poverty the world shall decline from them, and they shall seek, but shall not find; but if they embrace my Lady Poverty the world shall nourish them, because they have been given to the world for salvation". And again: "There are mutual obligations between the world and the brethren; they owe to the world a good example, the world owes them the provision of necessaries. When they belie their faith, and cease to give a good example, the world, by a just judgment, draws back its hand from them." In his care for Poverty the man of God feared a multitude; for appearance, even though not fact, points it out as rich. Wherefore he used to say: "O that it might come to pass that the world, beholding the Lesser Brethren very rarely, should wonder at their fewness!"

And so, bound to the Lady Poverty by an indissoluble tie, he looked for her dowry not in the present but in the future. Those psalms which refer to poverty —for instance, "The patience of the poor shall not perish for ever," and "Let the poor see and be glad"—he used to chant with more fervent affection and more gladsome rejoicing.

OF ALMS-SEEKING

CHAPTER XLI

Of his commendation of alms-seeking

71. THE holy father made use of alms gathered from door to door much more willingly than of such as had been offered. He declared that to be ashamed of begging was hostile to salvation, but affirmed that that shame in begging which does not draw back the foot was holy. He praised the blush rising in a modest forehead, but not the being confounded by fear. Sometimes in exhorting his disciples to seek alms he used these words: "Go, for at this latest hour the Lesser Brethren have been lent to the world in order that the elect may fulfil in them that which shall bring them this commendation from the Judge: 'That which ye have done to one of My Lesser Brethren ye have done to Me'." And accordingly he said that the Order had been privileged by the great Prophet who had so clearly expressed the title of its name. And therefore he wished the brethren to dwell not only in towns but in hermitages, in order that all might have whereof to deserve well, and that the reprobate might be stript of the veil of excuse.

CHAPTER XLII

An ensample of the Saint in alms-seeking

72. THAT he might not even once offend his holy spouse, the servant of the Most High used to act thus: If ever, when invited to eat by great lords,

he was to be honoured by a lavish table, he would first seek for scraps of bread among the neighbouring houses, and then, enriched thus by want, he hastened to sit down to meat. Sometimes, when he was asked why he did this, he answered that he would not relinquish an enduring inheritance for a fief granted for an hour. "It is Poverty," said he, "that appoints the heirs and kings of the kingdom of heaven, and not your false riches."

CHAPTER XLIII

The example which he set in the Court of the Lord of Ostia; and of his answer to that bishop

73. ONCE when S. Francis was visiting Pope Gregory of revered memory (at that time holding a lesser office) and the dinner-hour was at hand, he went for alms, and when he came back he laid some scraps of black bread on the bishop's table. At this sight the bishop was a little ashamed, especially on account of the newly invited guests. But the father with glad countenance distributed the alms he had received to the knights and chaplains at table, all of whom accepted them with wondrous devotion: some ate them, others out of reverence kept them, and when dinner was over the bishop rose, took the man of God within, raised his arms and embraced him, saying, "My brother, why hast thou put me to shame in the house which is thine and thy brethren's, by going for alms?"—"I have rather shown you honour," replied the Saint, "since I have honoured a greater Lord; for God is well-pleased

with poverty and with that especially which is voluntary begging. For I have a royal dignity and a pre-eminent nobility—to follow that Lord, who, though He was rich, for our sakes became poor." And he added, "A poor table furnished with scanty alms delights me more than great tables loaded with almost countless dishes". Then the bishop, much edified, said to the Saint, "My son, do what is good in thine eyes; for the Lord is with thee".

CHAPTER XLIV

His exhortation, both by example and precept, to alms-seeking

74. SOMETIMES at first he would discipline himself and spare the brethren's bashfulness by going about alone for alms; but when he saw that several brethren were not giving due heed to their calling he once said, "Dearest brethren, the Son of God Who for our sake made Himself poor in this world was nobler than we. We have for His sake chosen the way of poverty, and ought not to be ashamed to go for alms. It is by no means meet for the heirs of the kingdom to blush for the earnest of their heavenly inheritance. I tell you that many noble and wise men are to join our company, who will think it an honour to beg for alms. Do you, therefore, who are the first-fruits of them, be glad and rejoice, and refuse not to do what you are handing down for those holy men to do."

CHAPTER XLV

Rebuke of a brother refusing to beg

75. BLESSED Francis often used to say that a true Lesser Brother ought not to remain long without going for alms. "And the nobler my son is," said he, "the readier let him be to go, for in suchwise merits are heaping up for him."

There was in a certain "place" a brother who was a cipher at begging, but at table a number: and the Saint, observing that he was a friend of the belly and an unworking sharer in the fruits, once addressed him thus: "Go thy way, brother fly, for thou wouldst eat the sweat of thy brethren and be idle in God's work. Thou art like brother drone who though he endures not the toil of the bees wants to be the first to eat the honey." That carnal man, perceiving that his gluttony had been found out, went back to the world which he had not yet forsaken: for he quitted the Religion: and the "cipher at begging" was now no brother, and he who had been "a number at table" became a manifold devil.

CHAPTER XLVI

How he kissed the shoulder of a brother whom he met carrying alms

76. ANOTHER time, at Portiuncula, a brother returning with alms from Assisi began when he was now near the "place" to break forth into song, and to praise the Lord with a loud voice. On hearing

this the Saint suddenly jumped up, ran out, kissed the brother's shoulder, and said, taking the wallet on his own shoulder, "Blessed be my brother who goes readily, seeks humbly, and returns rejoicing".

CHAPTER XLVII

How he induced some secular knights to seek alms

77. WHEN blessed Francis, full of infirmities and now drawing near to his end, was at the "place" at Nocera, the people of Assisi sent messengers, formally appointed, to demand delivery of his person; that they might not, as touching the man of God's body, "give their glory to another". And as the knights were reverently bringing him home on horseback they came to a very poor village called Satriano; where, as hunger and the time of day called for food, they went about, but finding nothing for sale, came back to blessed Francis saying, "Thou must give us of thine alms, for here we can buy nothing". The Saint replied, "You find not because you trust more in your flies than in God. (Now he called pieces of money 'flies'.) But go again round the houses you have visited, and humbly ask for alms, tendering the love of God instead of money. Be not ashamed, for, after sin, all things are given us as alms, and the great Almsgiver is in His loving-kindness bountiful to the worthy and to the unworthy." The knights put shame aside, readily asked for alms and bought more for the love of God than they had for money; for all vied in giving to them gladly, nor had hunger any power where opulent poverty prevailed.

CHAPTER XLVIII

Of a piece of capon turned into a fish at Alexandria

78. IN almsgiving he looked to the gain of souls rather than to the sustenance of the flesh, and in giving no less than in receiving he made himself an example to others. Thus when he once came to Alexandria in Lombardy to preach God's word he was respectfully entertained by a God-fearing man of good report. His host asked him to observe the Holy Gospel by eating all that was set before him, and he graciously agreed to do so, being conquered by the devotion of his host, who ran in haste to prepare a capon seven years old (*sic*) on purpose for the man of God to eat. While the Patriarch of the Poor was sitting at table with the rejoicing household, straightway there appeared at the door a son of Belial, poor in all grace, and feigning poverty in necessary things. He craftily urged the love of God as he asked for alms, and with a lamentable voice craved assistance for God's sake. The Saint acknowledged that Name blessed above all things and sweeter to him than honey ; and most thankfully took up a piece of the bird which had been served up, put it on some bread and sent it to the beggar. To be brief, that wretch kept the gift in order to bring reproach on the Saint.

79. Next morning the Saint, as he was wont, preached God's word to the assembled people. Forthwith that wicked man began to bluster and tried to show the piece of capon to every one. "See," he yelled, "what kind of man this Francis is who is

preaching, whom you honour as a Saint! Look at all the meat he gave me while he was eating last night!" All the people cried out against the wretch and upbraided him as being filled with the Devil: but what he was trying to persuade them to be a piece of capon appeared in fact to all to be a fish, and the wretched man himself, abashed by the miracle, was forced to admit what every one else asserted. At length he blushed for shame, and atoned by penitence for the detected misdeed. He begged the Saint's pardon before them all, confessing the wicked intention he had had; and the meat returned to its own species, after the transgressor had returned to his right mind.

OF THOSE THAT RENOUNCE THE WORLD

CHAPTER XLIX

Ensample of one whom the Saint rebuked for distributing his property to his relations and not to the poor

80. THE Saint taught those coming to the Order previously to give a bill of divorcement to the world, by first offering outwardly their goods, and then inwardly themselves to God. He admitted to the Order none but those who had expropriated themselves and were keeping back nothing at all; both because of the word of the Holy Gospel and lest they should cause scandal by retaining a treasure-chest.

81. It happened that after the Saint had been preaching in the March of Ancona, a man came to

him humbly begging for admission to the Order. "If thou wilt be joined to the poor of God," said the Saint to him, "first distribute thy goods to the poor of the world." On hearing this the man went, and being led by carnal love, gave his goods to his relations and nothing to the poor. When he came back and told the Saint of that bounteous munificence, the father laughed at him and said, "Go thy way, brother fly, for thou hast not yet come out from thy house and kindred. Thou hast given thy goods to thy kindred, and hast defrauded the poor: thou art not worthy to live with the holy poor: thou hast begun with the flesh and laid an unsound foundation for a spiritual building." This brutish man went back to his relations and recovered his goods, relinquishing his virtuous purpose the more quickly because he would not relinquish his goods to the poor.

Such a pitiful distribution [as that man made] deludes many nowadays who seek to attain the life of bliss by a worldly beginning. For no one consecrates himself to God in order to enrich his kinsfolk, but in order to gain life by the fruit of good work, redeeming his sins by the price of compassion.

S. Francis often also taught the brethren if they were in want to have recourse to strangers rather than to those entering the Order, first for example's sake, and next to avoid all appearance of base advantage.

CHAPTER L

Of a vision relating to Poverty

82. IT pleases me here to relate a vision of the Saint which is worthy of record. One night at the end of long prayer he at last gradually fell asleep. That holy soul was brought into the sanctuary of God, and in a dream he saw among other things a Lady who was of this fashion: Her head appeared of gold, her bosom and arms of silver, her belly of crystal, and the parts thence downward of iron. She was of lofty stature, and her frame was subtly and symmetrically compacted by rule. But this Lady of noble form was covered by a foul mantle. When he arose in the morning the blessed father rehearsed the vision to the holy man brother Pacifico, but did not declare its meaning. Though many have expounded it at their pleasure I think it not unadvisable to keep to the interpretation of the said Pacifico, which the Holy Ghost suggested to him as he heard it. "This Lady of noble form" (he said) "is the beauteous soul of S. Francis. The golden head is contemplation of things eternal and wisdom therein: the silver bosom and arms are the utterances of the Lord pondered in the heart and fulfilled in action: the crystal by its hardness indicates sobriety and by its brightness chastity: the iron is stedfast perseverance; but take the foul mantle to be the frail despised body wherewith the precious soul is covered." Many, however, [also] having the spirit of God, understand by this Lady, Poverty,

as being the father's bride. The reward of glory (they say) made her golden, the heralding of fame made her of silver; the profession, one outwardly and inwardly and void of treasure-chests, made her crystalline; and final perseverance made her of iron; but for this illustrious Lady the judgment of brutish men wove a foul mantle. Many adapt this oracle to the Religion, following Daniel in tracing a succession of periods.

But that the vision refers to the father is especially clear from the fact that he himself, avoiding arrogance, absolutely refused to expound it: and surely if it had dropped down in reference to the Order he would not have passed it by in dumb silence.

OF S. FRANCIS' COMPASSION FOR THE POOR

CHAPTER LI

Of the compassion he had for the poor and how he envied those poorer than himself

83. WHAT tongue can tell how great was this man's compassion for the poor? He had an inborn kindness which was doubled by the tenderness poured from on high. Wherefore the spirit of Francis melted towards the poor; and to whom he could not give help he gave affection. Whatever want, whatever penury he saw in any one his mind swiftly referred it back to Christ. So in all the poor he read the Son of the poor Lady; bearing naked in his heart Him whom she bore naked in her hands. But whereas he had banished from himself all other envy, from the envy of

poverty alone he could not free himself. If ever he saw one poorer than himself he envied that man forthwith and feared to be outdone by him in the contest for poverty.

84. One day when the man of God was going about preaching he chanced to meet a poor man by the way; and, seeing that the man was naked he turned to his companion with compunction, saying: "This man's want does us great shame, and severely rebukes our poverty". "How so, brother?" answered his companion. Then the Saint answered with a lamentable voice: "I chose Poverty for my riches, and for my Lady, and see! she shines more brightly in yonder man. Knowest thou not that the sound has gone out through all the world that we for Christ's sake are the poorest of men? But yonder poor man proves that the case is otherwise." O envy to be envied! O emulation to be emulated by his sons! This is not that emulation which is grieved at the good things of others, not that which is darkened by the sun's rays, not that which is opposed to tenderness, not that which is tortured by spite. Thinkest thou that Gospel poverty has not something to be envied? She has Christ, and through Him has all in all. Why pantest thou for revenues, thou clerk of to-day? To-morrow thou wilt know that Francis was rich, when thou shalt find in thy hand the revenues of torments.

CHAPTER LII

How he punished a brother for speaking evil of a poor man[1]

85. ANOTHER day when he was preaching, a poor sick man came to the "place". Pitying the man's double misfortune, namely, want and illness, he began to discourse on poverty with his companion. And when, suffering with the sufferer, S. Francis had already entered into the feeling of his heart, the Saint's companion said: "Brother, it is true the man is poor, but perchance in all the province there is no one richer, in will, than he". The Saint rebuked him at once and said to him as he owned his guilt: "Make haste, put off thy tunic, fall down at the poor man's feet, and proclaim thyself guilty. And not only beg his pardon, but ask him to pray for thee." He obeyed, went to offer satisfaction, and returned. Then the Saint said to him: "Whenever thou seest a poor man, brother, a mirror of the Lord and of His poor Mother is set before thee. Likewise in the sick, consider the sicknesses He took on Himself for us."

Ah, there was ever a bundle of myrrh by Francis, he ever was looking on the face of his Christ, ever handling the "Man of Sorrows and acquainted with infirmities".

[1] *Cf.* above, I., 76.

CHAPTER LIII

Of the cloak given to an old woman at Celano

86. IT happened at Celano in winter-time that S. Francis was wearing a cloth folded like a cloak, which a friend of the brethren, a man of Tivoli, had lent him; and when he was in the palace of the Bishop of Marsica he met an old woman asking alms. Immediately he unfastened the cloth from his neck, and though it did not belong to him, gave it to the poor old woman, saying: "Go and make thyself a gown, for thou art in sore need of one". The old woman smiled, being overcome either by shyness or joy, took the cloth from his hands, hurried off, and, fearing that it might be asked for again if she delayed, cut it up with her scissors. But finding that the cloth she had cut would not be enough for a gown, she was encouraged by his former kindness to go back to the holy man and point out that there was too little cloth. He looked round at his companion, who had just such another cloth on his back, and said: "Hearest thou, brother, what this poor woman is saying? Let us bear the cold for the love of God, and do thou give her cloth to finish her gown with." Whereupon his companion gave, even as he had given, and both remained naked that the old woman might be clothed.

CHAPTER LIV

How he gave a cloak to another poor person

87. ANOTHER time, when S. Francis was returning from Siena, he met a poor man, and said to his companion: "Brother, we must give this cloak back to the poor man to whom it belongs, for we have borrowed it until we should happen to meet some one poorer than ourselves". His companion, bearing in mind the tender father's necessity, persisted in opposing him, so that he might not provide for another by neglecting himself. But the holy man said: "I will not be a thief; it would be reckoned to us as theft if we gave not to one in greater need". So the other said no more, and S. Francis handed the cloak [to the stranger].

CHAPTER LV

How he did the like for another poor person

88. THE like thing occurred at Cella di Cortona. Blessed Francis was wearing a new cloak that the brethren had got on purpose for him. A poor man came to the "place" lamenting aloud that his wife was dead and his poor family left desolate. The Saint said to him: "I give thee this cloak for the love of God, on condition that thou give it up to no one unless he pay thee well for it". The brethren forthwith came running in order to take the cloak away and prevent the gift from being made. But the poor man,

emboldened by the holy father's look, clutched the cloak with both hands to defend it, as being his own. Finally the brethren redeemed the cloak[1] and the poor man went off with the price.

CHAPTER LVI

How by the gift of a cloak he induced a man to cease from hating his lord

89. AT Colle, in the territory of Perugia, S. Francis once found a poor man whom he had known in former days in the world, and said to him: "Brother, how art thou?" But the other began angrily to heap curses on his lord, who had taken away all his goods, saying: "Thanks to my lord, whom the Lord Almighty curse, I am but in a bad way". S. Francis, pitying him in soul more than in body, because he was persisting in mortal hatred, said to him: "Brother, forgive thy lord for the love of God, that thou mayest deliver thy soul, and it may be that he will restore thee what he has taken. Otherwise, having lost thy property, thou wilt lose thy soul as well." "I cannot forgive him entirely," said the man, "unless he first restore what he has taken away." Then S. Francis, having a cloak on his back, said: "See, I give thee this cloak, and I entreat thee for the love of the Lord God to forgive thy lord". Forthwith the man's heart was softened, and, moved by this act of kindness, he took the gift and forgave the wrongs he had suffered.

[1] *I.e.*, they induced some one else to pay for it. *Cf. Spec. Perf.*, 31, and Goetz, pp. 174, 175.

CHAPTER LVII

How he gave a poor man the border of his tunic

90. ONCE when a poor man begged of him and he had nothing in his hands, he unsewed the border of his own tunic and gave it to the poor man. Sometimes also in the like necessity he took off his drawers. Such was the abundance of his compassion toward the poor, such the earnestness with which he followed the footsteps of Christ the poor man.

CHAPTER LVIII

How he caused the first New Testament that was in the Order to be given to the poor mother of two of the brethren

91. THE mother of two of the brethren once came to the Saint and confidently asked for alms. The holy father, sharing her distress, said to his vicar, brother Peter Cathanii, "Can we give any alms to our mother?" (For he called the mother of any brother the mother of himself and of all the brethren.) Brother Peter answered, "There is nothing left in the house that might be given her," adding, "We have one New Testament out of which, for want of a breviary, we read the lessons at matins". "Give our mother the New Testament," said blessed Francis, "that she may sell it for her need, because by it we are admonished to succour the poor. For my part I believe that the gift of it will be more pleasing than the reading out of

it." And so the book was given to the woman, and the first Testament there was in the Order was parted with through this sacred compassion.

CHAPTER LIX

How he gave a cloak to a poor woman suffering from her eyes

92. AT the time when S. Francis was staying at the Bishop of Rieti's palace for the cure of a disease of the eyes a poor woman from Machilone, suffering also from the like disease, came to the physician. The Saint, therefore, turned to his warden and addressed him familiarly somewhat as follows: "Brother warden, we must restore the property of another". "Let it be restored, father," he answered, "if there is any such thing with us." "That cloak," said S. Francis, "which we have borrowed from the poor woman yonder let us restore to her, for she has nothing in her purse for her expenses." The warden replied, "Brother, the cloak is mine and has not been lent us by any one. Use it as long as thou pleasest; when thou wilt not use it any more, give it back to me." (Now the warden had bought it a little while before for S. Francis' need.) The Saint said to him: "Brother warden, thou hast ever been courteous to me; I pray thee show [me] courtesy now." "Do as thou wilt, father," answered the warden, "whatsoever the spirit doth prompt thee." So [S. Francis] called a certain very devout layman and said to him: "Take this cloak and twelve loaves, and go and say to yonder poor woman: 'The poor man to whom thou lentest

the cloak thanks thee for the loan: but now take what is thine own'". The man went and did as he had been told. The woman, thinking it was in joke, said with shame: "Oh, don't bother me with thy cloak; I don't know what thou art talking about". But he insisted and put all into her hands. When she saw that there was indeed no deception, fearing lest what had been so easily gained might be taken away from her, she rose up by night, and, heedless of the cure of her eyes, carried the cloak home with her.

CHAPTER LX

How three women appeared to him in the way and vanished after giving him a new greeting

93. I WILL briefly relate a wondrous thing, of doubtful interpretation, but most certain truth. When Francis, Christ's poor man, was hastening from Rieti to Siena for the cure of his eyes, he passed over a plain near Rocca di Campiglio, accompanied by a certain physician who was attached to the Order. And lo! three poor women appeared by the wayside as S. Francis was passing. They were so much alike in stature, age and countenance that you might suppose that threefold matter had been perfected by one form. And as S. Francis came up they reverently bowed their heads and extolled him by a new greeting, saying: "Welcome, Lady Poverty!" Forthwith the Saint was filled with joy unspeakable, for there was nothing in him that he would so gladly have men salute as that which those women had fixed

on. And at first, thinking that they really were poor women, he turned to the doctor who accompanied him, and said: "I pray thee, for God's sake, give, so that I may give something to these poor women". The doctor quickly took out money, and leaping from his horse, gave some coins to each one. So they went on a little further on their way, and then the brethren and the doctor looked round, and saw that all that plain was void of women. Greatly amazed, they reckoned the occurrence among the wonders of God, knowing that those were not women who had flown away more swiftly than birds.

OF S. FRANCIS' ZEAL IN PRAYER

CHAPTER LXI

Of his time and place of prayer and of his earnestness in prayer

94. FRANCIS, the man of God, though absent in body from the Lord, strove to make his spirit present in heaven, and having already become a fellow-citizen of the angels, was separated from them by the wall of the flesh only. His whole soul thirsted for his Christ, to Whom he devoted not only his whole heart, but his whole body.

We relate, as we have seen with our eyes (so far as it is possible to convey them to human ears), a few of his achievements in prayer, for posterity to copy. Of his whole time he made a holy leisure wherein to write wisdom on his heart, for fear that unless he were continually advancing, he might seem to be falling short.

If invaded by visits from lay-folk, or by any business, he would cut them short unfinished, and go back to his inward musings. The world had no savour for him who was fed with heavenly sweetness, and Divine delights made him revolt from the gross concerns of men. He always sought out a hidden place wherein he might make not only his spirit but his every member fit for his God. When in public he felt himself suddenly visited by the Lord, in order that he might not lack a cell, he made a little cell of his cloak: and sometimes if he had no cloak, he covered his face with his sleeve, that he might not disclose the hidden manna. He always put something between him and the bystanders, lest they should be aware of the Bridegroom's touch, so that he might pray unseen [even] when at close quarters with many on ship-board. Finally, when he could do none of these things, he made a temple of his breast. There was no spitting nor groaning, for he was unconscious of self; no hard breathing nor outward motions, for he was absorbed in God.

95. Such was his behaviour in inhabited places, but when praying in the woods and in solitary places he would fill the grove with sighs, water the ground with tears, smite his breast with his hands, and having there discovered, as it were, a secret hiding-place, he would often speak with his Lord in words. There he would make answer to his Judge, there entreat his Father; there he would converse with his Friend, there rejoice with the Bridegroom. And in order that he might make of the whole marrow of his being a whole burnt-offering in manifold ways, he would set before his eyes in manifold ways Him who is

supremely simple. Often with lips unmoved he would ruminate within, and, drawing outward things inward, would uplift his spirit on high. And so the whole man, not so much praying, as having become a [living] prayer, concentrated his whole attention and affection on the one thing which he was seeking from the Lord. With what sweetness, think you, was he encompassed as he became accustomed to such intercourse? He knows: for I can but wonder. Knowledge will be given to him who has experience: it is not granted to those that have none. So, boiling in fervour of spirit, piercing in utterance, his aspect and his whole soul liquefied, he was even now abiding in the supreme commonwealth of the heavenly kingdom.

The blessed father was wont never to pass over negligently any visitation of the Spirit; but when it was offered, he followed it up, and, so long as the Lord permitted, he enjoyed the sweetness thus offered. If therefore while he was being pressed by any business, or was on a journey he gradually became aware of the touch of grace, he would taste that sweetest manna by frequent snatches here and there. For as he was on his way he would allow his companions to go on ahead and himself stand still; and so, converting the new inspiration into enjoyment, he received not the grace in vain.

CHAPTER LXII

Of his devout recitation of the canonical Hours

96. HE recited the canonical Hours with no less reverence than devotion. For though suffering from disease of the eyes, stomach, spleen and liver, he would never, when chanting the Psalms, lean against a wall or door-post, but always said the Hours upright and bare-headed, without letting his eyes wander, and without interruption. When going on foot through the world, he always stood still to say the Hours, and when riding, he dismounted. Thus one day when he was returning from Rome and it was raining incessantly, he dismounted from his horse to say the Office, and, as he stayed some time, he was wet through. For he used sometimes to say, "If the body eats its food in quiet, which food together with itself will become meat for worms, with what great peace and tranquillity ought the soul to take its food, which is its God?"

CHAPTER LXIII

How at prayer he drove away wandering thoughts

97. HE deemed himself grievously to offend if at any time he were moved by vain fancies when at prayer. If any such thing happened he never failed to atone for it by immediate confession, and his zeal herein had become so much a matter of use that

he was very seldom troubled by flies of this sort. One Lent he had spent his odds and ends of time (that they might not be altogether lost) in making a certain vessel. One day while he was devoutly saying Tierce his eyes chanced to turn to look at the vessel, and he felt that the fervour of his inner man was checked. Grieving, therefore, that the cry from his heart to the Divine ears had been interrupted, when Tierce was finished he said in the hearing of the brethren: "Alas for the fruitless work which has had the power to turn away my mind to it! I will sacrifice it to the Lord, whose sacrifice it has hindered." And with these words he seized the vessel and burnt it up. "Let us be ashamed," said he, "to be seized by trivial fancies when we are speaking to the Great King at the time of prayer."

CHAPTER LXIV

Of his mental extasy

98. MANY a time he was caught up out of himself, and hung in such rapture of contemplation that he could disclose to none that which he experienced, transcending human sense: an instance, however, which once became known, makes clear to us how often he was absorbed in the celestial sweetness. He was riding on an ass at a time when he must needs pass through Borgo S. Sepolcro, and as he intended to rest at a certain lepers' house, it became known to many that the man of God was to pass by. Men and women flocked from all sides to see him, desiring with

their wonted devotion to touch him. What then? They handled him, they pulled him along, and cut off little bits from his tunic to put away. He seemed insensible to it all, and heeded what was going on as little as a corpse. At length he and his company reached their destination, and having long since left Borgo S. Sepolcro, the contemplator of heavenly things (as though coming back from elsewhere) anxiously inquired when they would be getting near Borgo?

CHAPTER LXV

His behaviour after prayer

99. WHEN he came back from his private devotions (which changed him almost into another man) he strove his hardest to seem like other people, for fear that the gale of [human] favour might cause him to lose what he had gained, if his fervour showed itself. Moreover he often spoke thus to his familiar friends: "When a servant of God is visited at prayer by the Lord with some fresh consolation, he ought, before coming forth from prayer, to raise his eyes to heaven, and, clasping his hands, to say to God: 'O Lord, Thou hast sent this consolation and sweetness from heaven to me, an unworthy sinner, and I restore it to Thee that Thou mayest keep it for me, for that I am a robber of Thy treasure'. And again: 'Lord, take from me Thy good in this world, that Thou mayest keep it for me hereafter'. Such should be his language, in order that when he comes forth from prayer he may bear himself toward others as much after

the manner of a poor sinner as if he had gained no fresh grace." He would also say: "For the sake of a trifling reward one may lose a priceless thing, and may easily provoke the giver not to repeat his gift". Finally it was his custom to rise for prayer so stealthily and gently that none of his companions noticed either that he was rising or that he was praying. But when late at night he went to bed he made a noise and almost a din, so that his going to rest might be heard by all.

CHAPTER LXVI

How a bishop who came upon him in prayer was deprived of speech

100. WHILE S. Francis was praying one day at the "place" of Portiuncula the Bishop of Assisi happened to come to pay him a friendly visit, as he was in the habit of doing. As soon as he entered the "place" he went without ceremony to the Saint's cell, not having been summoned, knocked at the door and was about to go in. And behold, as he was putting his head inside, and perceived the Saint praying, immediately a trembling seized him, his limbs stiffened and he even became speechless. Suddenly by the will of God he was forcibly driven out and led backward for some distance. I believe either that the bishop was unworthy to behold that secret thing or else that the Saint was worthy of retaining still longer that which he had. The bishop, abashed, returned to the brethren, and on opening his mouth to confess his fault he recovered his speech.

CHAPTER LXVII

How an abbot felt the power of S. Francis' prayer

101. ANOTHER time the abbot of the monastery of S. Giustino, in the diocese of Perugia, happened to meet S. Francis. Dismounting quickly from his horse, the abbot talked with S. Francis for a short time concerning his soul's health, and then, as he was going away, humbly begged S. Francis to pray for him. "I will gladly pray for thee, my lord," answered S. Francis. So when the abbot had gone a little distance away from S. Francis, the Saint said to his companion: "Wait a little, brother, for I wish to pay the debt which I have promised to discharge". (For his custom always was when asked to pray for any one not to put the matter aside, but to perform such a promise quickly.) And so, as the Saint was praying to God, suddenly the abbot felt in his spirit an unwonted warmth and a sweetness he had never experienced before, so that he seemed quite carried out of himself in rapture of mind. He stood still for a little while, and then, coming to himself again, he knew the power of holy Francis' prayer. Thenceforth therefore he ever glowed with greater love toward the Order, and related the fact to many as a miracle.

Meet it is that God's servants should give one another such gifts; and such communion between them in giving and receiving is fitting. That holy love which is sometimes termed "special" is content with the fruit of prayer; charity makes little account

of earthly gifts. To help and to be helped in the spiritual warfare, to commend and to be commended before Christ's tribunal, this I believe to be the characteristic of holy love. But to what a height do you suppose that man rose in prayer to be able thus to raise up another by his merits?

OF THE SAINT'S UNDERSTANDING IN HOLY SCRIPTURE AND OF THE POWER OF HIS WORDS

CHAPTER LXVIII

102. THOUGH this blessed man had not been nurtured in any learned studies, yet being a learner, from God, of the "wisdom which is from above," and being illuminated by the brightness of the eternal light, he had no mean knowledge of the Scriptures. For his genius, pure from all taint, pierced through hidden mysteries, and the lover's affection entered within, whereas the knowledge of masters remains without. He would sometimes read the sacred books; and what he had once put into his mind he wrote indelibly on his heart. Memory supplied the place of books; for if he heard a thing once it was not in vain, because his affection ruminated it with continual devotion. This, he said, was the fruitful way to learn and read; not to wander through a thousand treatises. He held him for a true philosopher who should put nothing before the longing for eternal life: and he would say that a humble and not presumptuous inquirer applying himself to Scripture would easily attain from the knowledge of himself to the knowledge of God.

He often unravelled difficult questions, and, though unskilled in words, made his understanding and power abundantly manifest.

CHAPTER LXIX

Of the prophetic utterance which he expounded at the request of a friar Preacher

103. WHILE he was staying at Siena, one of the Order of Preachers, a spiritual man and a doctor of divinity, chanced to come there. So he visited S. Francis, and the expert and the Saint enjoyed for a long time the sweetest talk about God's word. And the divine questioned Francis concerning Ezekiel's saying, "If thou proclaim not to the wicked man his wickedness, I will require his soul at thy hand,"[1] and he said: "I myself, good father, know many who to my knowledge are in mortal sin, but I do not always proclaim their wickedness to them. Will their souls, then, be required at my hand?" But when blessed Francis humbly said that he was unlearned, and that it were more expedient for him to be taught by the other than to interpret the meaning of Scripture, that humble doctor added: "Brother, though I have heard this saying expounded by several wise men, I should be glad to know how thou understandest it". Then blessed Francis said: "If the passage is of general application, I take it to mean that the servant of God ought in life and holiness so to burn within himself as to reprove all the wicked by the light of his example and the tongue of his conversation. So, I say, the brightness of his

[1] Ezek. III., 18.

life and the perfume of his fame will proclaim to all their wickedness." Therefore the divine, greatly edified, said to the companions of the blessed Francis as he went away: "My brethren, this man's theology, based on purity and contemplation, is a soaring eagle, while our learning crawls with its belly on the ground".

CHAPTER LXX

Of the things he expounded when questioned by a certain Cardinal

104. ANOTHER time when he was at Rome in a certain Cardinal's house, he was questioned on some obscure passages, and brought deep things to light in such wise that you might think he had ever dwelt with the Scriptures. And the lord Cardinal said to him: "I do not question thee as being a lettered man, but as one who has the Spirit of God; and I gladly accept thy interpretation, because I know that it proceeds from God alone".

CHAPTER LXXI

What he said he knew in answer to a brother who exhorted him to apply himself to reading

105. WHEN he was ill and oppressed by pain everywhere his companion once said to him: "Father, thou hast ever fled for refuge to the Scriptures, they have ever furnished remedies for thy pains: I pray thee now also to have something read to thee from the Prophets, and perhaps thy spirit will re-

joice in the Lord". The Saint replied: "It is good to read the testimonies of Scripture, it is good to seek out our Lord God in them; but for myself, I have already mastered so much of the Scriptures that I have an ample store for meditation and reflection. I need no more, my son: I know Christ, the poor man crucified."

CHAPTER LXXII

Of the swords which brother Pacifico saw glittering in the Saint's mouth

106. THERE was in the March of Ancona a certain layman forgetful of himself and ignorant of God, who had altogether sold himself to vanity. He was known as "the King of Verses," because he was the chief of those who sang of wantonness, and a composer of worldly songs. To be brief, worldly glory had raised him up so high, that he had been crowned with great pomp by the Emperor. So while thus walking in darkness he was "drawing iniquity with cords of vanity," the Divine Compassion pitied the wretched man and determined to call him back, that the outcast might not perish. By God's providence blessed Francis and he met at a certain monastery of poor nuns. The blessed father, with his companions, had come thither with his brethren to see his spiritual daughters, the layman, with many boon-companions, to see a kinswoman of his. And the hand of the Lord was upon him, and he beheld with his bodily eyes S. Francis signed as with a cross with two glittering swords, one of which went from his head to his feet, the other across his breast

from one hand to the other. (He did not know blessed Francis before, but when he was indicated by so great a miracle, recognised him immediately.) Abashed at the sight, he began to purpose better things—at least, in the distant future. But the blessed father, after first preaching to all generally, turned the sword of God's word against this man, for he took him aside and admonished him gently concerning the vanity of the age and contempt of the world, and then pierced his heart by the threat of God's judgments. He answered forthwith: "What need is there for more words? Let us come to deeds. Take me away from men, and restore me to the great Emperor." Next day the Saint vested him, and named him brother "Pacifico," for that he had been brought back to the peace of God. And by how much the greater had been the crowd of his vain companions, by so much the more numerous were they who were edified by his conversion. Brother Pacifico, rejoicing in the company of the blessed father, began to perceive unctions he had never perceived before: for he was allowed a second time to see what was veiled from others, inasmuch as not long afterwards he beheld on blessed Francis' forehead a great sign Tau[1] which with variegated circles displayed the beauty of the peacock.

[1] The last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, the old form of which was a cross. See Ezek. ix. 4 (Vulgate).

CHAPTER LXXIII

Of the efficacy of his sermons and of the testimony which a certain natural philosopher bore to it

107. NOW although the evangelist Francis preached to the unlearned in homely and unlearned language, knowing as he did that power is more needed than words, yet among spiritual men and those of greater capacity his utterances were life-giving and profound. He would hint in a few words at what was unspeakable, and mingling ardent gestures and movements with his words, transported his hearers wholly to heavenly things. He made no use of the keys of distinctions, because he did not lay out in order discourses which were not of his own inventing. Christ, the true Power and Wisdom, gave to his voice the voice of power. A natural philosopher, a learned and eloquent man, once said: "Whereas I can remember every word of the sermons of others, the words uttered by holy Francis alone escape me: and if I commit any of them to memory they do not seem to me the same that dropped from his lips before".

CHAPTER LXXIV

How by the power of his word he, through brother Sylvester, drove devils out of Arezzo

108. NOT only were Francis' words effectual in his presence but sometimes when transmitted through others they did not return in vain. Accord-

ingly he happened once to come to Arezzo at a time when that whole city was so shaken with intestinal war that its destruction seemed imminent. The man of God therefore lodged outside the city in a suburb, and beheld devils exulting over it and inflaming the citizens to their mutual destruction. So he called a brother, Sylvester by name, a godly man of worthy simplicity, and commanded him thus: "Go before the gate of the city, and on behalf of Almighty God command the devils to go out of it as speedily as possible". The simple and dutiful brother hastened to obey, and, bespeaking the favour of the Lord by praise, he cried aloud before the gate: "On behalf of God, and by order of our father Francis, depart far hence, all ye devils!" Soon afterwards peace was restored to the city, and the laws of good government were observed in great tranquillity. And so afterwards blessed Francis opened his preaching to the citizens with these words: "I speak to you as to men formerly in subjection to the Devil, and in the bonds of demons, whom however now I know to have been set free by the prayers of a certain poor man".

CHAPTER LXXV

Of the conversion of that same brother Sylvester, and of a vision that he saw

109. I THINK it not unfitting that the conversion of the aforesaid Sylvester, and how the Spirit moved him to enter the Order, should be joined to my present subject. Sylvester, then, was a secular priest of

the city of Assisi, from whom in former days the man of God had bought stones for the repair of a church:[1] and when in those days Sylvester saw brother Bernard (who after the Saint of God was the first plant of the Order of Friars Minor[2]) perfectly renouncing his property and giving it to the poor, he was inflamed by devouring greed, and complained to the man of God that the price of the stones previously sold him had not been paid in full. Francis smiled, perceiving that the priest's spirit was tainted with the poison of avarice; but wishing to give some sort of refreshment to that accursed burning, he filled the priest's hands with uncounted money. The priest Sylvester rejoiced at the gift, but wondered still more at the giver's liberality. He went home, and often thought over this thing; he murmured (a happy murmur!) that he, now growing old, was still loving the world; and wondered that that young man was thus setting all things at naught. To him, therefore, now filled with fair fragrance, Christ opened the bosom of His mercy, showing him by a vision the worth of Francis' deeds, their pre-eminent brightness in His sight, their glorious spreading over the whole world. For in his sleep he beheld a golden cross issuing from Francis' mouth, whose top touched the heavens, and whose outstretched arms encircled either part of the world in their embrace. The priest, remorseful at the sight, shook off harmful delay, forsook the world, and became a perfect imitator of the man of God. He began his

[1] See above, I., 18; II., 11.

[2] Rather, the second. See above, I., 24. The memory of the unnamed first brother there recorded had by this time faded away.

life in the Order perfectly and by the grace of Christ finished it most perfectly.

But what wonder is it if Francis appeared crucified, all whose concern was ever with the Cross? What great thing is it if, the wondrous Cross having been thus rooted within him, it sprang up out of a good ground and brought forth notable flowers, leaves, and fruits? Nothing of other kind could arise in that soil when from the first that wondrous Cross had thus claimed it all for its own.

But I must now return to my subject.

CHAPTER LXXVI

How he delivered a brother from assaults of the devil

110. IT happened that a certain brother had long been vexed by temptation of the spirit, which is a more subtle and dangerous thing than the enticement of the flesh. At last he came to S. Francis, and fell humbly at his feet shedding a flood of bitter tears, but his deep sobbing prevented him from saying anything. The father was moved to pity for him, and, perceiving him to be vexed by wicked impulses, said: "I bid you, ye devils, in the power of God, henceforth not to assault my brother as ye have hitherto presumed to do". Presently the blackness of darkness was dispersed and the brother rose up free; and he felt no more molestation than if he had never been molested.

CHAPTER LXXVII

Of the baleful sow that devoured a lamb

111. THAT his word even when addressed to brutes was of wondrous power appears plainly enough elsewhere: but I will here touch on a case which occurs to me.

It chanced that a certain ewe brought forth a lamb one night when the servant of the Most High was lodging in the monastery of S. Verecondo, in the diocese of Gubbio. But a cruel sow that was there spared not the innocent creature's life, but ravenously bit the lamb to death. When men arose in the morning they found the lamb dead, and knew of a truth that the sow was guilty of that crime. When the tender father heard it he was moved to wondrous pity, and, at the recollection of another Lamb, bewailed before all who were present this lamb that had been killed, saying: "Alas, brother lamb, innocent creature, who representest the everlasting advantage of mankind! Cursed be the pitiless one that slew thee, and let no man nor beast eat of her!" Wonderful to relate, that baleful sow immediately sickened, and after suffering torments for three days, at length paid the penalty of death. It was cast into the monastery ditch, where it lay for a long time dried up like a board, nor furnished food to any famished creature.

AGAINST FAMILIARITY WITH WOMEN

CHAPTER LXXVIII

Of avoiding familiarity with women; and of his manner of talking with them

112. HE enjoined the absolute avoidance of that honeyed poison, familiarity with women, which leads even holy men astray; for he feared lest thereby the frail spirit should quickly be broken and the strong often be made weak. Except in the case of the most approved man he judged it to be as easy for any one associating with women to escape their contagion as (in Scriptural phrase) to walk in the fire without burning the soles of one's feet.[1] And, that he might speak by action, he showed himself a pattern of all virtue. To such a degree was a woman unwelcome to him that you would suppose her to be not so much a warning or example as an object of dread or horror. When in speaking he encountered the troublesome loquacity of women, he, with downcast face and short words, would call on them to be silent. Sometimes, on the other hand, with his eyes fixed on heaven, he seemed to be drawing thence the answers he gave to those who were muttering of earth. But those women in whose minds a holy urgency of devotion had placed the abode of wisdom, he taught by wondrous but brief discourses. Whenever he spoke with a woman he uttered what he had to say in a tone loud enough to be heard by all. Once he said to a companion: "I tell thee the truth, dearest brother, there are

[1] Prov. vi. 17.

two women only whose faces I should recognise if I looked at them. The face of such an one (he added) and of such an one is known to me: but that of no other."

Well said, father, for the sight of them makes no one holy. Well said, I repeat, for they bring no light, but much loss, were it but loss of time! They are a hindrance to those who would take the arduous journey, and look upon that Countenance which is full of graces.

CHAPTER LXXIX

A parable against looking on women

113. HE was wont to pierce unchaste eyes by the following parable. A mighty king sent two messengers in succession to the queen. The first came back and reported the exact words of the message only. For like a wise man he had kept his eyes in his head and they had not darted out any whither. The other came back, and after briefly delivering his message framed a long story about the lady's beauty. "Truly, my lord, I have seen a most lovely woman. Happy he that enjoys her." But the king said: "Thou wicked servant, hast thou cast wanton eyes on my spouse? It is clear that thou hast desired to purchase the thing thou hast curiously gazed on." He ordered the first messenger to be recalled, and said: "How thinkest thou of the queen?" "Very well indeed," was the answer, "for she listened in silence, and answered wisely." "And is there no beauty in her?" said the king. "Be it thine,

my lord, to look upon that; my business was to deliver the message." The king gave sentence thus: "Thou whose eyes are chaste be in my chamber yet more chaste in body: but let that man go out of my house lest he defile my couch". And the blessed father would say, "Over-confidence makes one less on one's guard against the foe. If the Devil can get but one hair in a man he will soon make it grow into a beam. Nor even if after many years he has been unable to overthrow him whom he has been tempting, does he grudge the delay if only he may get him at last. For this is his business, nor cares he for aught else by day and night."

CHAPTER LXXX

An ensample of the Saint against too great intimacy [with women]

114. IT happened once, when S. Francis was on his way to Bevagna, that he was unable to reach the place, being weak from fasting. His companion sent a messenger to a certain spiritual lady to ask humbly for bread and wine for the holy man. As soon as she heard of his need, she ran to him with her daughter (a virgin consecrated to God), bringing what was necessary. After the Saint had been refreshed and was somewhat recovered, he in his turn refreshed the mother and daughter with the Word of God; but, though he preached to them, he looked at neither in the face. As they withdrew, his companion said to him: "Brother, why didst thou not look at the holy

virgin who came to thee with so much devotion?" He answered: "Who should not fear to look upon a bride of Christ? But if one can preach with the eyes and the face, she may have looked at me though I did not see her."

And many times in speaking of this matter he declared that all talk with women is worthless except only in the way of confession or the very brief admonition that is customary. For he said: "What business has a Lesser Brother to transact with a woman unless when she makes religious request for holy penance or for advice as to a better life?"

OF THE TEMPTATIONS HE SUFFERED

CHAPTER LXXXI

Of the temptations of the Saint, and how he overcame temptation

115. AS the merits of S. Francis increased so also did his enmity with the old Serpent. For the greater were the unctions of the Saint the more subtle became the temptations and the more grievous the assaults wherewith the Devil plied him. For though he had often proved the man a strenuous warrior, who had never yielded in the struggle for so much as an hour, he still endeavoured to attack his ever-victorious foe. Accordingly at a certain season there was sent to the holy father a most grievous temptation of the spirit, assuredly for the increase of his crown. Thenceforward he was hard bestead and filled with griefs, he afflicted and mortified his body, he prayed earnestly and shed

plenteous tears. After having been thus assailed for more than two years, one day while he was praying in S. Maria de Portiuncula, he heard in the spirit a voice saying: "Francis, if thou wilt have faith as a grain of mustard-seed thou shalt bid a mountain remove and it shall remove". The Saint answered: "Lord, which is the mountain that I should wish to remove?" And again he heard it said: "The mountain is thy temptation". Then he said with tears: "Be it unto me, O Lord, as Thou hast said". And forthwith all the temptation was driven away, and he was made free and wholly set at rest within.

CHAPTER LXXXII

How the Devil called him and tempted him concerning lust; and how the Saint overcame the temptation

116. AT the hermitage of the brethren at Sartiano that wicked one who ever envies the advantage of the children of God presumed to attack the Saint after this manner. Seeing that he was still increasing in holiness, and was not neglecting the profit of to-day on account of that of yesterday, one night while the Saint was at prayer in a cell he called him thrice, saying: "Francis, Francis, Francis"; and he answered: "What wilt thou?" And the Devil said: "There is no sinner in the world whom the Lord will not pardon if he turn [from his sin]; but whosoever shall kill himself by hard penance shall find no mercy for ever". The Saint immediately perceived by re-

velation the stratagem of the foe, how he had tried to recall him to lukewarmness. What of that? The enemy forthwith attacked him in another way, and, seeing that he could not conceal this snare, he prepared another, namely, the enticement of the flesh. But in vain, for he who had unmasked the wiles of the spirit could not be tricked by the flesh. So the Devil put into him a most grievous temptation of lust. But as soon as the blessed father felt it he laid aside his garment and scourged himself with his cord with all his might, saying: "There! brother ass, thus must thou stay, thus endure the whip! The tunic belongs to Religion! it is not lawful to steal it: if thou wilt go any whither, go!" (117) But seeing that, in spite of scourging himself, the temptation did not leave him, though he had coloured all his members with weals, he opened the cell, went out into the garden, and plunged naked into deep snow. Then, collecting the snow by handfuls, he made up seven lumps of it like balls, and setting them before him began to address his body thus: "See," he said, "this large one is thy wife, those four are thy two sons and two daughters, the two others are the manservant and maidservant who are required to wait on them; and make haste and clothe them all, for they are dying of cold! If, however, the manifold care of them troubles thee, be zealous to serve God only." Forthwith the Devil departed, being put to confusion, and the holy man went back to his cell glorifying God. A certain spiritual brother, who was then engaged in prayer, saw it all by the bright moonlight; and when the Saint found out afterwards that the brother had seen him, he was much distressed, and

bade him reveal the thing to no one as long as he should live.

CHAPTER LXXXIII

How he delivered a brother from temptation: and concerning the good of temptation

118. ONCE when a brother was sitting alone with the Saint he said to him: "Pray for me, kind father, for I believe I shall forthwith be delivered from my temptations, if thou deign to pray for me. For I am afflicted above my strength, and I know that this is not hid from thee." S. Francis replied: "Believe me, son, for I believe thee to be all the more a servant of God on account of this very thing; and know that the more thou art tempted the dearer thou art to me". And he added: "Verily I say unto thee that no one should deem himself a servant of God until he has passed through temptations and tribulations. Temptation conquered (he said) is in some sort the ring whereby the Lord espouses to Himself the soul of His servant. There are several who hug themselves over their long-standing merits and rejoice in having undergone no temptations. But forasmuch as fright alone would crush them even before the conflict, let them know that the Lord has taken thought for their weakness of spirit; for hard fights scarcely ever present themselves, except when virtue has been perfected."

HOW HE WAS BEATEN BY DEVILS

CHAPTER LXXXIV

How he was beaten by devils; and how that Courts are to be shunned

119. THIS man was not only attacked by Satan with temptations, but fought with him hand to hand. Being once invited by the lord Leo Cardinal of S. Croce to stay a while with him in Rome, he chose as his residence a secluded tower whose nine vaulted chambers resembled the abodes of hermits. So the first night when he was going to rest after pouring out prayer to God, devils came and fiercely assaulted the Saint of God. They beat him long and severely and at last left him as if half dead. When they departed, the Saint, having at length recovered breath, called his companion who was sleeping in one of the other vaults and said to him when he came: "Brother, I would have thee stay by me, for I fear to be alone; for I was beaten by devils just now". The Saint was trembling and quaking in his members like one who is suffering from a severe fever. (120) So during the night, the whole of which they passed without sleep, S. Francis said to his companion: "Devils are the officers whom our God appoints to punish excesses. For it is a token of His more abundant grace when naught is left unpunished in His servant while he lives in the world. I do not, however, recollect any offence which I have not, through God's mercy, washed away by satisfaction: for His fatherly condescension has ever so dealt with me as to show me in prayer and medita-

tion the things that are pleasing or displeasing to Him. But it may be that He has allowed His officers to break in upon me because my remaining in Magnates' courts does not present a good appearance to others. When my brethren who dwell in poor 'places' hear of my being with Cardinals, they will perhaps suspect that I am overflowing with luxuries. Therefore, brother, I judge it better for him who is set as an example to fly from Courts, and to strengthen those that are braving hardships by bearing the like." Next morning, therefore, they went to the Cardinal, and after telling him all, bade him farewell.

Let them that frequent palaces mark this; and know that they have been drawn abortive from their mother's womb. I condemn not obedience, but I denounce ambition, idleness and luxury: and finally for all "obediences,"[1] I emphatically set forth Francis as a model. Yet let us bear whatever displeases God, since it pleases men so!

CHAPTER LXXXV

An ensample in point

121. SOMETHING occurs to me which I think should by no means be passed by. There was a brother who when he saw brethren abiding in a certain Court was attracted by some ambition or other and desired to become a courtier with them.

[1] An "obedience" is an order given to one of the brethren by a superior "on his obedience". *Cf.* above, I., 29, and below, II., 152.

And one night while his curiosity was stirred concerning court-life he saw in his sleep the aforesaid brethren put outside the "place" of the brethren and separated from their fellowship. Moreover he saw them feeding out of a foul and disgusting pigs' trough where they were eating pulse mixed with human dung. When that brother saw this he was exceedingly amazed, and when he arose at dawn cared no more about the Court.

CHAPTER LXXXVI

Of the assaults he endured in a certain solitary place, and of a certain brother's vision

122. THE Saint once came with a companion to a church far off from any habitation, and, desiring to offer up solitary prayer, he said to his companion: "Brother, I would remain here alone to-night. Go thou to the hospital, and return to me at dawn." So he remained alone pouring out long and earnest prayers to the Lord; and at length he looked about to see where he might lay his head to sleep. Suddenly he was troubled in spirit, he began to feel fear and disgust, while his body trembled all over. He was clearly conscious of devilish assaults being made against him and of troops of devils rushing noisily over the roof of the building. So he arose forthwith, went out, and said, as he made the sign of the cross on his brow: "On behalf of God Almighty I bid you, ye devils, to do to my body whatsoever you have been allowed to do. I will bear it willingly,

since, having no greater enemy than the body, you will avenge me of mine adversary in that you instead of me will be wreaking vengeance thereon." And so when the devils who had assembled to cow his spirit saw that it was all the readier amid the weakness of the flesh they vanished forthwith in shame and confusion. (123) When morning was come his companion returned to him, and, finding the Saint prostrate before the altar, waited outside the choir, and himself prayed fervently meanwhile before the cross. And lo! he fell into an ecstasy, and saw among many seats in heaven one more honourable than the rest, adorned with precious stones, and radiant with all glory. He wondered at that noble throne and silently considered whose it might be, and, as he thus wondered, he heard a voice saying to him: "Yonder seat was that of one of the fallen, and it is now being kept for humble Francis". At length on coming back to himself that brother saw blessed Francis come forth from prayer, and presently he fell at his feet, placing his arms in the form of a cross, and addressed him, not as living in the world, but as already reigning in heaven, saying: "Pray, father, for me to the Son of God, that He impute not sin to me". The man of God put forth his hand and lifted him up, perceiving that something had been shown to him in prayer. At length, as they were departing thence, that brother questioned blessed Francis, saying: "What is thine own opinion of thyself, father?" "I think myself the greatest of sinners," he answered, "for if God had followed any other wicked man with such great mercy he would have been tenfold more spiritual than I." At this

the Spirit said forthwith in that brother's heart: "Know that the vision thou sawest was true: for humility shall exalt the most humble to the seat lost by pride".

CHAPTER LXXXVII

How a certain brother was freed from temptation

124. A CERTAIN spiritual brother of long standing in the Order was afflicted by sore tribulation of the flesh, and seemed sunk in the depth of despair. And his grief was doubled daily, for his conscience, which was more tender than discerning, drove him to make confession about nothing; for such zeal ought to be shown in confessing, not the fact of being tempted, but the having yielded to temptation, even if but a little. But this brother was so shy that he feared to disclose the whole (which amounted to nothing) to one priest, and so he divided his cogitations, and imparted some to one and others to others. But one day when he was walking with S. Francis the latter said to him: "Brother, I tell thee that thou art not bound to confess thy tribulation any more to any one, and fear not, because that which besets thee without thy being the cause of it shall redound to thy glory, not to thy guilt. And as often as thou shalt be troubled say the Lord's Prayer seven times on my authority." The brother marvelled how the Saint knew of his trouble, and was filled with the utmost joy, and before long escaped from all tribulation.

OF TRUE JOY OF SPIRIT

CHAPTER LXXXVIII

Of spiritual joy and the praise thereof; and of the evil of sloth

125. S. FRANCIS held that the surest remedy against the thousand wiles of the foe is spiritual joy. For he used to say: "The Devil most exults when he can filch from a servant of God his joy of spirit. He carries dust that he may cast it into the conscience through even the smallest chinks, and defile the candour of the mind and the purity of the life; but when spiritual joy (he said) fills the heart, in vain does the Serpent shed his deadly poison. Devils cannot hurt Christ's servant when they see him filled with holy mirth. But when the spirit is tearful, woe-begone, and grieving it readily sinks into gloom or else turns to vain enjoyments." He strove therefore ever to be gladsome of heart, and to maintain the unction of the Spirit and the oil of joy. He avoided with the utmost care the wretched malady of spiritual sloth, so that if he felt it stealing ever so little into his mind, he flew immediately to prayer, for he said: "When God's servant (as often happens) is troubled about anything, he ought forthwith to arise and pray, and remain persistently in his heavenly Father's presence until He restores to him the joy of His salvation. For if he tarries in gloom, that Babylonian stuff will increase, and unless it be at length purged out by tears, will produce abiding rust in the heart."

CHAPTER LXXXIX

Of the angelic lute that he heard

126. WHEN S. Francis was staying at Rieti for the cure of his eyes, he called one of his companions who had been a lute-player in the world, and said: "Brother, the children of this world understand not the sacraments of God; and musical instruments appointed of old for God's praise have been converted by men's lust into means of giving pleasure to their ears. Therefore, brother, I would have thee secretly borrow a lute and bring it here, so that by a virtuous song thou mightest give some solace to 'brother body,' which is full of pains." The brother answered: "Father, I am not a little ashamed to do so, lest men might think that I am tempted by such frivolity". "Let us give it up, then, brother," said the Saint. "It is good to give up many things to avoid shocking the opinion of others." The next night, as the holy man was watching and meditating on God, suddenly there sounded a lute of wondrous harmony and sweetest melody. No one was seen, but the music, as it floated hither and thither, marked the movements of the lute-player passing to and fro. At length, fixing his spirit on God, the holy father enjoyed such sweetness in those melodious strains that he fancied himself transported into the other world. When he arose in the morning the Saint called the aforesaid brother, related in order all that had happened, and then added: "The Lord who comforts the afflicted has never left me comfortless.

For lo! although I could not hear lutes of men, I have heard a lute sweeter than theirs."

CHAPTER XC

How the Saint when cheered in spirit would sing in French

127. SOMETIMES he would behave thus: the sweet melody of the spirit bubbling up within him was wont to break forth into utterance in French, and the vein of the Divine whisper which his ear perceived in secret would burst out into a French song of joy. Sometimes, as we have seen with our eyes, he would pick up a stick from the ground, and, putting it over his left arm, would draw across it, as if across a viol, a little bow bent with a string; and, going through the proper motions, he would sing in French about the Lord. Oftentimes all this ecstasy of joy would end in tears, and the song of gladness would melt into compassion for the Passion of Christ; and then this holy man would heave continual sighs, and utter repeated groanings; and, heedless of the things he had in his hands, would be uplifted toward heaven.

CHAPTER XCI

How he rebuked a brother that was sad and admonished him as to his behaviour

128. HE once saw a companion of his wearing a sad and listless look, and said to him with no little displeasure: "It is not seemly for a

servant of God to show himself sad and dull before men, though his demeanour should always be decorous. Examine thine offences in thy chamber and weep and groan before thy God there. When thou returnest to the brethren put gloom aside and be like the rest." And after a little he said: "They who are jealous of the salvation of men envy me sore and are always trying to trouble in my companions [the joy] that they cannot trouble in me". Now so much did he love a man full of spiritual joy that at a certain chapter he had these words written down for a general admonition: "Let the brethren beware of showing themselves outwardly sullen and gloomy hypocrites, but let them show themselves rejoicing in the Lord, merry, and joyful, and gracious, as is meet".

CHAPTER XCII

How the body ought to be treated to prevent it from murmuring

129. THE Saint moreover once said: "Brother body should be provided for with discretion, that the tempest of sloth be not raised by him: and to the end he be not wearied in watching and reverent persistence in prayer, let him be deprived of occasion for murmuring. For he might say: 'I am faint with hunger; I cannot bear the burden of thy exercise'. But if after eating sufficient food he should mutter such things, let him know that a lazy beast wants the spur, and that the goad awaits a sluggish ass."

In this teaching alone did the most holy father's deeds not correspond with his words, for he subjected his body, assuredly innocent, to scourgings and hardships, multiplying wounds upon it without cause, inasmuch as the heat of the spirit had already so refined his body that even as "his soul was athirst for God, so also was his most holy flesh in manifold wise".[1]

OF FOOLISH JOY

CHAPTER XCIII

Against vainglory and hypocrisy

130. BUT while he welcomed spiritual joy, foolish joy he carefully avoided, knowing that that which perfects should be fervently loved, and that which infects not less watchfully shunned. His study was to crush vainglory in the seed, and not to suffer that which might offend the eyes of his God to exist even for a moment. For oftentimes when he was being extolled by the acclamations of many, he would grieve and groan over it, immediately turning his mood to sadness. Once in winter, the only covering of his holy body being a single tunic patched with very common stuff, his warden (who was also his companion) procured a fox's skin and brought it to him, saying: "Father, thou art suffering from infirmity of the spleen and stomach; I pray thee of thy charity in the Lord to allow this skin to be sewn underneath thy tunic, or, if not the whole, at least a little of it over thy

[1] Ps. lxii. 1 (Vulgate).

stomach". S. Francis replied: "If thou wishest me to have this done inside my tunic, have a piece of the same size sewn on outside, which may point out to men the skin hidden inside". The brother heard this and disapproved; he objected, but without effect. Finally the warden gave way and the pieces were sewn one over the other, that Francis might not appear outwardly other than he was inwardly.

O thou who wast the same in tongue and in life, the same without and within, the same when subject and when superior! Thou who didst ever glory in the Lord lovedst naught of outward, naught of private glory! But, lest I should offend the wearers of skins, I crave their indulgence for speaking of one piece of skin having been put on for the sake of the other: for we know that those who were stripped of innocence needed tunics of skins.

CHAPTER XCIV

Of a confession of his, making against hypocrisy

131. ONCE at the hermitage of Poggio,[1] about Christmas, when a large number of people had been called together to hear him preach, he prefaced his discourse with these words: "You believe me a holy man, and that is why you have come devoutly hither. But I confess to you that during all this fast I have been eating food seasoned with lard." In this way he often ascribed to pleasure what had rather been a concession to infirmity.

[1] Poggio Bustone, near Rieti (Sabatier, *Spec. Perf.*, p. 114).

CHAPTER XCV

Of a confession of his, making against vainglory

132. WITH the like fervour he would, if ever his spirit were moved to vainglory, at once reveal it before all men by open confession. Once when he was walking through Assisi he met an old woman who asked him to give her something. Having nothing but a cloak, with ready bounty he gave her that. But perceiving an impulse to self-complacency stealing over him, he immediately confessed before all the bystanders that he had had vainglory [in his action].

CHAPTER XCVI

His words against those who praised him

133. HE strove to hide the good gifts of his Lord in the secrecy of his bosom, lest that which might be a cause of his falling should become matter for boasting. For oftentimes when many were proclaiming him blessed he would answer: "I may have sons and daughters yet: praise not one who is [not][1] secure. No one should be praised whose end is uncertain. If the Giver should ever choose to take away what he has lent, the body and soul would alone remain, and these even the unbeliever possesses." Such was his language to those who praised him. But to

[1] The insertion of the negative seems demanded by the context. *Cf. Spec. Perf.*, 45 (ed. Sabatier), 13 (ed. Lemmens).

himself he said: "If the Most High had given as much to a robber, he would be more thankful, Francis, than thou art".

CHAPTER XCVII

His words against those who praised themselves

134. HE would often say to the brethren: "No one ought to flatter himself with unjust applause on account of anything that a sinner can do. A sinner (said he) can fast, pray, weep, mortify his own flesh. But this he cannot do: be faithful to his Lord. Herein therefore we should glory, if we render to God His glory, if serving Him faithfully we ascribe to Him whatever He gives. The flesh is man's greatest foe. It knows not how to recollect anything so as to grieve over it, nor to foresee anything so as to fear it. Its study is, to use up the present. And, what is worse, it claims for itself, and transfers to its own glory what has been given not to it, but to the soul. It gathers from without praise for its virtues, applause for its watchings and prayers. It leaves the soul nothing, and seeks payment even for its tears."

OF HIS CONCEALMENT OF THE STIGMATA

CHAPTER XCVIII

135. WE may not keep silence concerning the thick veil wherewith he covered those marks of the Crucified, meet to be revered even by the

highest Spirits, nor concerning his carefulness in hiding them. From the time when true love of Christ had first "changed" the lover "into the same image," he concealed and hid that treasure with such care that it was long before even his familiar friends were aware of it. But God's Providence would not suffer it to be hid for ever and not to come to the eyes of those dear [to the Saint]. And indeed the exposed position of the limbs did not allow this thing to be concealed. Once when one of his companions saw the stigmata in his feet, he cried: "What is this, good brother?" "Mind your own business," said S. Francis. (136) Another time the same brother asked for S. Francis' tunic to shake it out, and, seeing that it was bloody, he said to the holy man after he had returned it: "What manner of blood is this wherewith the tunic seems stained?" But the Saint put his finger to his eye, and answered: "Ask what *that* is, if you don't know it to be an eye". He rarely washed his hands all over, only bathing the fingers, lest that thing should be revealed to the by-standers. His feet he washed most rarely, and not less secretly than rarely. If any one asked for his hand to kiss he half uncovered it, holding out the fingers, only so far as to leave place for the kiss, and sometimes he held out his sleeve only instead of his hand. He wore woollen socks on his feet that they might not be seen, putting skin over the wounds to lessen the harshness of the wool. But though the holy father could not wholly hide from his companions the stigmata in his hands and feet, he was distressed if any one looked at them, wherefore also his companions themselves, filled with prudence of spirit, used to turn

their eyes away whenever any necessity compelled him to uncover his hands or feet.

CHAPTER XCIX

How a certain brother beheld the stigmata by means of a pious fraud

137. WHILE the man of God abode at Siena a brother from Brescia chanced to come there who greatly desired to see the stigmata of the holy father, and earnestly besought brother Pacifico that he might do so. Brother Pacifico said: "When I am about to depart hence I will ask to kiss his hands, and when he gives them I will wink at thee, and thou wilt see". So they both came to the holy man prepared to start, and Pacifico knelt down, and said to him: "Bless us, dearest mother, and give me thy hand to kiss". He kissed the hand (unwillingly held out), and winked at the brother that he might look; then he asked for the other hand, and kissed it and showed it to him. As they were departing, S. Francis suspected that there had been a pious fraud (as was indeed the case), and immediately called brother Pacifico back, and judging such devout curiosity to be undevout, said to him: "God pardon thee, brother, for thou givest me much distress sometimes". Pacifico at once fell at his feet, and humbly asked: "What distress have I given thee, dearest mother?" But S. Francis made no answer; and the incident closed in silence.

CHAPTER C

How a certain brother saw the wound in his side

138. NOW though the uncovered position of the limbs disclosed the wounds in his hands and feet to some, no one was worthy to see the wound in his side in his lifetime except one only and he only once. For whenever the Saint had his tunic shaken out he would cover the wound in his side with his right arm. Sometimes, however, he hid that blessed wound by putting his left hand over his pierced side. But when one of his companions was scratching him, that brother's hand slipped down to the wound and caused him great pain. One day another of the brethren who was seeking, with prying curiosity, to see what was hidden from others said to the holy father: "Shall we shake out thy tunic, father?" "God reward thee, brother," said the Saint, "for I want it to be done." So as he was taking it off that brother looked attentively at him and clearly saw the wound in his side. He alone saw it while the Saint was alive, none of the others until after his death.[1]

CHAPTER CI

Of the hiding of virtues

139. IN such wise had that man abjured all glory that savoured not of Christ: in such wise had he laid an eternal anathema on men's applause.

[1] See above, I., 95.

He knew that the reward of fame lessens the secret [reward] of the conscience and that it is far more harmful to make a wrong use of virtues than to be without them. He knew that it is as great a virtue to guard what one has got, as it is to get it. Alas! more of our deeds are occasioned by vanity than by charity, and the world's applause has greater weight than the love of Christ. We do not judge the feelings, we do not "try the spirits," and when vainglory has urged us to some action we fancy it has been produced by charity. Moreover if we have done but a little good, we cannot bear the weight of it, but rid ourselves of all that while we are alive and lose the shore at last. We patiently endure not to be good, we may not bear not to be seen, not to be believed: and so we live wholly in the praise of men, for that we are naught but men.

OF HUMILITY

CHAPTER CII

Of S. Francis' humility in dress, in opinion and in behaviour. Against [trusting to] one's own opinion

140. HUMILITY is the guard and ornament of all the virtues. When the spiritual building does not rest on this foundation, it tends to fall even when it seems to be growing. That nothing might be wanting to a man adorned with so many gifts this grace had filled S. Francis in more abundant measure, for he reputed himself nothing but a sinner,

whereas he was the ornament and splendour of every kind of holiness. In order that he might lay the foundation which he had learnt from Christ, he strove to build himself on this virtue of humility. Forgetful of the things he had gained, he fixed his eyes on his failings alone, considering that more was lacking to him than was present with him. The only thing he coveted was to become better, and to add fresh virtues to the former, wherewith he was not content. He was humble in dress, humbler in opinion, humblest in his own repute. This prince of God was distinguished as a Superior by this bright jewel alone: that among the "lesser" he was the least. It was this virtue, this title, this token that showed him to be the Minister-general. All loftiness was absent from his mouth, all pomp from his gestures, all ostentation from his actions. In many matters he had learnt his opinions by revelation, but yet he would bring them into discussion and prefer the opinions of others. He believed his companions' advice to be safer, and others' views seemed to him better than his own. He used to say that any one who kept back the treasure-chests of his own opinion had not left all for the sake of God. He preferred to hear blame of himself rather than praise, for that the former drove him to amendment while the latter impelled him to fall.

CHAPTER CIII

Of his humility toward the Bishop of Terni and toward a certain peasant

141. HE was once preaching to the people of Terni, and when he had finished, the bishop of that city commended him in the presence of all, saying: "At this last hour God has enlightened His Church by this man, poor and despised, simple and unlettered: wherefore we are bound ever to praise the Lord, knowing that He has not dealt so with every nation". On hearing this, the Saint took it wondrous kindly that the bishop in such plain terms should have judged him to be contemptible; and, as they entered the church, he fell at the bishop's feet and said: "Truly, lord bishop, thou hast done me great honour in that, whereas others deprive me of the things that are mine, thou alone hast kept them unharmed. Thou, I say, like a discerning man, hast separated the precious from the worthless, ascribing praise to God and worthlessness to me."

142. Not only did the man of God behave himself humbly to his superiors, but even as regards his equals and those in low estate he was readier to be admonished and corrected than to admonish. One day accordingly when he was riding on an ass (being unable to walk through weakness and infirmity) and was passing through the field of a peasant who was working there at the time, the peasant ran to him and eagerly asked whether he were brother Francis? And

when the man of God had meekly replied that he was, the peasant said: "Strive to be as good as all men say thou art; for many put their trust in thee. I advise thee therefore never to come short of expectation!" Now when Francis the man of God heard this he dismounted, fell down before the peasant and humbly kissed his feet, thanking him for deigning to admonish him.

And so, though he was so famous that very many reckoned him a Saint, he deemed himself worthless before God and men, and felt no pride over his abounding fame and sanctity nor even over the great number of brethren and sons so holy that had been given him as an earnest of the reward of his merits.

CHAPTER CIV

How in a chapter[1] he resigned his office: and concerning a certain prayer

143. IN order to observe the virtue of holy humility, a few years after his conversion, Francis, in a chapter in the presence of all the brethren of the Order, resigned the office of Superior in these words: "Henceforth I am dead to you; but here," he said, "is brother Peter Cathanii, and let you and me all obey him". Whereupon he bowed down before him and promised him obedience and reverence. The brethren therefore began to weep, and grief drew loud wailings from them when they saw themselves in some sort

[1] Michaelmas, 1220.

orphaned of such a father. Then the blessed Francis arose, clasped his hands, and said, raising his eyes to heaven: "O Lord, I commend to Thee the family that Thou hast hitherto committed to me; and now, because of the infirmities which Thou knowest, sweetest Lord, being unable to take care of it, I entrust it to the Ministers. Be they bound to give account to Thee in the day of judgment, if any brother perish through their negligence or example, or even their harsh correction." Thenceforth he remained in subjection until death, behaving with greater humility than any of the other brethren.

CHAPTER CV

How he resigned his companions

144. ANOTHER time he resigned all his companions to his vicar, saying: "I will not seem to be singular by reason of this privilege of freedom: but let brethren accompany me from 'place' to 'place' just as the Lord shall inspire them". And he added: "I have seen before now a blind man with a little dog only to show him the way". This then was his glory, to put aside the appearance of any singularity or ostentation, that the power of Christ might dwell in him.

CHAPTER CVI

His words against those covetous of office: and description of a Lesser Brother

145. NOW when he saw that some were panting after office, whom in addition to other things their mere eagerness for power alone rendered unworthy, he used to say that they were not Lesser Brethren but that they had fallen from glory, having forgotten the vocation wherewith they had been called. And when some wretched men resented being removed from office (since it was the honour, not the burden of it, they sought) he would silence them by many discourses. He once said to his companion: "I should not seem to myself a Lesser Brother unless I were in the state which I will describe to thee". And he said: "Suppose that, being set over the brethren, I go to the chapter, and preach to them and admonish them and at the end they speak against me, saying, 'An unlettered and contemptible man will not do for us: therefore we will not have thee to reign over us, because thou art uneloquent, simple and ignorant,' and finally I am expelled with obloquy and despised by them all. I tell thee that unless I heard these words with unchanged looks, with unchanged gladness of mind, and with unchanged purpose of sanctity, I should by no means be a Lesser Brother." And he would add, "Office is an occasion of falling, praise, of headlong destruction; the soul's gain lies in the humility of subjection". Why then do we pursue danger rather than gain, when time has been given us that we may make gain?

CHAPTER CVII

How he would have the brethren be in subjection to the clergy; and wherefore

146. NOW although he would have his sons be at peace with all men and behave themselves as little ones toward everybody, still he taught by word and showed by his example that they should be specially humble toward the clergy. For he used to say: "We have been sent for the salvation of souls in aid of the clergy, that what is found wanting in them may be supplied by us. Each one shall be rewarded not in respect of his authority but of his toil. Know ye, brethren, that the fruit of souls is most pleasing to God, and that it can be better gained by peace with the clergy than by strife with them. But if they hinder the people's salvation, 'vengeance belongeth unto God,' and He will reward them in due time. Therefore, be subject to them who bear rule,[1] that so much as in you lies no jealousy may spring up. If you are sons of peace, you shall win clergy and people to God, and this the Lord judges to be more acceptable than to scandalize the clergy and win the people only. Cover their lapses," said he, "supply their manifold defects, and when you have done so, be the more humble."

[1] *Praelatis*, a term applied to all who bear rule in the Church.

CHAPTER CVIII

Of the respect he showed to the Bishop of Imola

147. ONCE, when S. Francis came to Imola, a city of Romagna, he presented himself before the bishop of the place to ask him for licence to preach. The bishop said: "Brother, it is enough for *me* to preach to my people". S. Francis bowed his head and humbly went out, but after a short time he came back again. The bishop said: "What dost thou want, brother? What art thou seeking for now?" And blessed Francis replied: "My lord, when a father has driven a son out of one door he must come in again by another". The bishop, conquered by this humility, embraced him with glad looks, and said: "Thou and all thy brethren may for the future take my general licence to preach in my diocese, for this holy humility of thine has earned this privilege".

CHAPTER CIX

Of the mutual humility and charity of himself and S. Dominic

148. THOSE two bright lights of the world, S. Dominic and S. Francis, were once at Rome with the Lord Cardinal of Ostia, who was afterwards Pope. And as in turn they uttered honeyed words concerning God, the bishop at last said to them: "In the primitive church the pastors of the church were poor, and men who glowed with charity and not with greed. Why (he said) do we not make bishops and pre-

lates of your brethren, who excel other men in teaching and example?" There was a contention between the Saints as to which of them should answer; each strove not to anticipate but to give way to the other; nay, each was urging the other to answer. Each, therefore, was foremost in respect of the other, while each paid honour to the other. At length humility conquered Francis, so that he did not put himself forward, and it also conquered Dominic so that in humble obedience he answered first. Blessed Dominic, therefore, gave this answer to the bishop: "My lord, my brethren, if they only recognize it, have been raised to a good degree, nor, so far as I can, will I allow them to acquire any other mark of dignity". After he had finished this brief reply, blessed Francis bowed down before the bishop and said: "My lord, my brethren have been styled Lesser that they presume not to become greater. Their calling teaches them to be in lowliness, and to follow the footsteps of Christ's humility, that thereby at last they may be exalted above the rest in the sight of the Saints. If (he said) you would have them bear fruit in the Church of God, hold and keep them in the state to which they have been called, and bring them back to lowliness even againt their will. Therefore, father, I pray you by no means to allow them to rise to high office, lest their pride should be proportionate to their poverty and they should wax arrogant against the rest." Such were the answers of these blessed men.

149. What say ye, sons of the Saints? Jealousy and envy prove you degenerate as much as greed of honours proves you bastards. "Ye bite and devour one another," nor do your wars and strifes arise from

aught but your lusts. You have to wrestle against the hosts of darkness, you have to struggle hard against armies of devils, and you turn the points of your swords against one another. The fathers, filled with wisdom, turn their faces to the mercy-seat and look familiarly on one another ; but the sons, filled with envy, are to one another grievous to behold. What shall the body do if it has a divided heart? Surely the teaching of piety would advance more fruitfully throughout the world if the bond of charity joined the ministers of God's word more firmly together; for our speaking and teaching are chiefly mistrusted because the presence among us of a leaven of hatred is shown by evident signs. I know that the good on either side are not concerned herein, but the bad, who, as I should judge, deserve to be rooted out, lest they taint the holy. What in conclusion shall I say of them who savour of loftiness? The fathers reached the kingdom by the way of humility, not of loftiness ; the sons walk about in the ring of ambitious desires and ask not for the way to the city of their habitation. What remains but that we reach not the glory of them whose way we do not follow? Be this far from us, O Lord. Make the disciples humble beneath the wings of humble masters; make kindred spirits kind; "and mayest thou see thy children's children and peace upon Israel".

CHAPTER CX

How each of them commended himself to the other

150. WHEN the servants of God had finished their answers, as we have said above, the Lord of Ostia, much edified by the discourses of both, gave boundless thanks to God. And as they departed thence, blessed Dominic asked S. Francis if he would deign to give him the cord wherewith he was girded. S. Francis was reluctant to do this, being moved by humility to refuse the request even as the other was moved by charity to make it. However, the happy devotion of the suppliant prevailed, and Dominic most devoutly girded himself beneath his inner tunic with the cord that had been given him. At last they clasped hands and commended themselves each to the other most sweetly: and the one Saint said to the other: "I would, brother Francis, that thy Religion and mine might be one, and that we might live in the Church after the like pattern". And when at length they parted, S. Dominic said to several who were standing by: "Verily I say unto you that the other Religious ought to follow this holy man Francis, so great is the perfection of his holiness".

OF OBEDIENCE

CHAPTER CXI

How, for true obedience' sake, he ever had a warden

151. IN order that he might make gain in many ways and turn the whole present time into merit, this most prudent merchant chose to be driven with the bridle of obedience and to submit himself to the government of another. Therefore not only did he resign the office of General, but, for the sake of the greater advantage of obedience, he asked for a good warden for himself whom he might specially honour as his Superior. So he said to brother Peter Cathanii, to whom he had previously promised holy obedience: "I ask thee for God's sake to entrust thy charge as concerning me to one of my companions, to whom, as to thyself, I may yield reverent obedience. I know (he said) the fruit of obedience and I know that to one who has put his neck under the yoke of another, no time passes without gain." And so his earnest request was granted and he remained in subjection everywhere until his death, always reverently obeying his own warden. And he once said to his companions: "Among other things which God's mercy has deigned to grant me, it has bestowed on me this grace, that I would obey a novice of an hour's standing, were he assigned to me as warden, as carefully as I would any one however ancient or discreet. A subject (he said) ought to consider his Superior not as a man, but as Him for whose sake he

is in subjection: and the more contemptible the ruler, the more pleasing the humility of the subject who obeys."

CHAPTER CXII

How he described the truly obedient man; and of the three sorts of obedience

152. AT another time when blessed Francis was sitting with his companions he sighed forth some such lament as this: "There is scarce any Religious in all the world that obeys his Superior perfectly". His companions, much moved, said to him: "Tell us, father, what perfect and supreme obedience is". But he answered, describing the truly obedient man under the figure of a dead body: "Take a corpse, and put it where you please, you will see that it does not resist being moved, grumbles not at its position, and if let alone, does not cry out. If it be placed on a throne it will look, not above, but beneath; if arrayed in purple its pallor will be doubled. This," he added, "is the truly obedient man; he discusses not wherefore he is moved, cares not where he is placed, does not press to be transferred elsewhither. When raised to office, he keeps his wonted humility; the more he is honoured, the more unworthy he deems himself to be."

Another time, when speaking of the same matter, he said that commands issued on request were properly *licences*, while those enjoined without having been asked for he named sacred *obediences:* both, he said, were good, but the latter were the safer. But he believed

that obedience to be supreme, and to have nothing of flesh and blood in it, whereby one goes by Divine inspiration among the unbelievers, whether for one's neighbours' gain or from longing for martyrdom. And to ask for this "obedience" he judged to be very acceptable to God.

CHAPTER CXIII

How that an order "on obedience" should not lightly be given

153. THEREFORE he deemed that an order should rarely be given "on obedience," and that the weapon which ought to be the last should not be hurled at first. He said that the hand must not quickly be laid on the sword; but that he who when ordered "on obedience" hastened not to obey neither feared God nor respected man. Nothing is truer than these words. For what is authority to command in a rash officer but a sword in the hand of a madman? And what is more hopeless than a Religious who despises obedience?

CHAPTER CXIV

Of a brother whose hood he threw into the fire for having come to see him without an "obedience," though drawn by devotion to him

154. HE once took off the hood of a brother who had come [to him] alone without an "obedience," and ordered it to be thrown into a large fire. When no one rescued the hood (for they feared

the father's countenance which was somewhat displeased) the Saint bade it be drawn out of the flames, and it was uninjured. Though the Saint's merits could bring this about, some merit on the part of that brother was perhaps not wanting: for eagerness to see the most holy father had constrained him, though discretion, the sole charioteer of the virtues, was not there.

CHAPTER CXV

Of those who set a good or bad example: of the example of a certain good brother: and of the behaviour of the brethren of old time

155. HE used to declare that the Lesser Brethren had been sent by God in these latest times to display examples of light to those who were wrapped in the darkness of sin. He would say that he was filled with the sweetest perfumes and anointed with the efficacy of precious ointment when he heard the exploits of holy brethren in distant parts of the world. It happened that a brother named Barbaro had once said an abusive word to another brother in the presence of a nobleman of the island of Cyprus; but on seeing that the brother had been somewhat wounded by this attack, he took some asses' dung, and, fired by revenge against himself, put it into his mouth and chewed it, saying: "Let the tongue which has poured forth the venom of anger against my brother feed on dung". When the knight saw this he was struck with amazement, and departed greatly edified: and from that time placed himself and his goods at the free disposal of the brethren. And all the brethren

without fail observed this custom, that if ever one of them spoke an angry word to another, he fell on the ground straightway and caressed the foot of the offended brother, even against the latter's will, with blessed kisses. In such things the Saint exulted, I mean when he heard of his sons bringing forth of themselves examples of holiness: and he heaped blessings most worthy of all acceptance on such brethren as should lead sinners to the love of Christ by word or deed. He would have his sons correspond by a true resemblance to the zeal for souls wherewith himself was perfectly filled.

CHAPTER CXVI

Of some who set a bad example: of the Saint's curse upon them, and of his grievous displeasure thereat

156. SO also any one who dishonoured the holy Religion by wicked deeds or example incurred the terrible sentence of his curse. Thus one day when he was told that the Bishop of Fondi had said to two brethren who had come before him, and by way of showing greater contempt for themselves allowed their beards to grow to excessive length: "Beware that the beauty of the Religion be not smirched by such presumptuous innovations"; the Saint arose forthwith, stretched out his hands toward heaven, and in a flood of tears broke out into words of prayer, or rather of imprecation, after this manner: "O Lord Jesu Christ, who didst choose the Apostles twelve in number, and though from this number one fell, the rest clave to Thee, and

preached the holy Gospel, being filled with one spirit, Thou, Lord, in this last hour, remembering Thy mercy of old, hast planted the Religion of the brethren to prop Thy faith, and that the mystery of Thy Gospel might be fulfilled by their means. Who, then, shall make satisfaction for them before Thee, if not only do they not display examples of light to all men (for which purpose they have been sent forth), but rather show forth works of darkness? Let them who by their evil example confound and destroy that which Thou hast built up in the past by the holy brethren of this Order, and dost not cease to build up—let them be cursed by Thee, most holy Lord, by all the Court of Heaven, and by me, thy little servant."

Where are they who proclaim themselves happy in his blessing and boast that they had gained his intimacy as fully as they chose? If (which God forbid) they shall be found to have displayed in themselves the works of darkness to the peril of others, without having repented, woe unto them, woe of eternal damnation!

157. "The best brethren," he would say, "are put to confusion by the works of the bad brethren, and are under judgment through the example of the wicked, even in that wherein they have not sinned themselves. Wherefore they are piercing me with a cruel sword and are plunging it into my bowels all day long." Wherefore, chiefly on this account, he withdrew himself from the brethren's company lest he might chance to hear anything unfavourable concerning any one of them, to the renewing of his grief. And he would say: "The time will come when through evil examples the Religion be-

loved of God shall be so ill spoken of that it shall be ashamed to show itself in public. But those who at that time shall come to enter the Order shall be led by the operation of the Holy Ghost only, nor shall flesh and blood put any stain upon them, and they shall be truly blessed of the Lord. And although, as charity grows cold, which makes the saints work fervently, meritorious works be not found in them, unbounded temptations shall come upon them, and those who in that time shall have been found approved shall be better than their predecessors. But woe to them who while hugging themselves on the mere show of religious conversation shall be numbed in sloth and shall not stedfastly resist the temptations that are permitted for the trial of the elect: for they alone who shall have been approved shall receive the crown of life: and meanwhile the wickedness of the reprobate is tasking them."

CHAPTER CXVII

Of the revelation made to him by God concerning the state of the Order; and that the Order shall never fail

158. BUT he was greatly comforted by visitations of God, whereby he was assured that the foundations of his Religion would ever remain unshaken. And it was also promised to him that the number of those who were perishing would undoubtedly be made good by the substitution of elect brethren. For once when, distressed by evil examples, he betook himself in his distress to prayer, he brought back this rebuke from the Lord: "Why, thou mannikin, art thou dis-

tressed? Have I so set thee as shepherd over My Religion that thou knowest not that I am its chief Protector? I set thee, a simple man, over it to the end that those who will may follow after the things that I do in thee for the others to copy. It is I who have called [the brethren], I who will keep and feed them, and who will repair the falling away of some by the substitution of others, so that even where a substitute is not born I will cause him to be born. Be not therefore distressed but 'work out thy salvation,' for even though the Religion were reduced to the number of three, it shall ever, through My gift, remain unshaken." Thenceforth he said that a multitude of imperfect brethren were overpowered by the virtue of one holy man, for that the thickest darkness yields to the ray of a single light.

AGAINST IDLENESS AND THE IDLE

CHAPTER CXVIII

A revelation made to him as to when he was God's servant and when not

159. FROM the time when this man began to cleave to God after casting away transitory things he scarce allowed an instant of time to pass unoccupied. Indeed, though he had already brought a great store of merits into the treasure of God, he remained ever fresh, and ever more ready for spiritual employments. He deemed it a grave offence not to be doing some good thing, and judged that not to be always going forward was to be going back. So one night while he abode in

a cell at Siena he called his sleeping companions to him and said: "Brethren, I asked the Lord that He would deign to show me when I am His servant and when not. For (said he) I would be naught else but His servant. And Himself the most gracious Lord has now deigned to give me this answer: 'Know that thou art then truly My servant when thou thinkest, speakest, and doest holy things'. And therefore I have called you, brethren, because I would be ashamed in your sight if ever I fail to do any of these things."

CHAPTER CXIX

Penance for idle words imposed at Portiuncula

160. ANOTHER time at S. Maria de Portiuncula, the man of God, considering that what has been gained by prayer often flows away through idle words spoken after prayer, ordained this remedy against the fault of idle words: "Let every brother who utters an idle or unprofitable word be bound to own his guilt forthwith, and for each idle word to say the Lord's prayer once. And my will is, that in case he shall have been the first to blame himself for his fault, he say the Lord's prayer for his own soul; but if he have been first rebuked by another, that he apply the prayer to the soul of him that rebuked him."

CHAPTER CXX

How he, himself a worker, hated the idle

161. HE used to say that the lukewarm, who did not apply themselves earnestly to some occupation, should soon be spewed out of the mouth of God. No one could appear before him idle without receiving a sharp reprimand. For he himself, the pattern of all perfection, used to work and labour with his hands, suffering naught of that best gift of time to run to waste. And once he said: "I desire that all my brethren work and be employed, and that those that know no craft, learn": and he added, giving the reason, "In order that we may be the less burdensome to men; and lest in idleness heart or tongue wander into what is unlawful". Now the gain or hire of labour he did not leave to the determination of the labourer, but to that of the Warden or Family.

CHAPTER CXXI

A lament addressed to S. Francis touching idle and gluttonous brethren

162. O HOLY father, let me be permitted to lift up on high to-day a lament for those who are called thine! The practice of virtue is hateful to many of them, who, by desiring to rest before they have toiled, prove themselves to be not sons of Francis but of Lucifer. Warriors are less abundant with us than weaklings, though these having been born to toil ought to reckon their life as a warfare. These will not profit

through action, and cannot through contemplation. When they have distressed all by their singularity, plying their jaws more than their hands, they hate "him that rebukes in the gate," nor do they "suffer themselves to be touched with the tips of the fingers". But still more do I wonder at the impudence of these men (to use blessed Francis' word), for whereas at home they could only have lived by their sweat, now, without toiling, they are fed through the sweat of the poor. Wondrous prudence, indeed! Though they do nothing, you would think them always occupied. They know their meal-times; and if ever they feel hungry they complain that the sun has gone to sleep. Am I to believe, kind father, that these monsters of men are worthy of thy glory? No, not even of thy tunic. Thou didst ever teach men to seek in this wanton and fleeting time the wealth of merit that they might not hereafter be brought to beggary: but these enjoy not even their country thoroughly, for they must afterwards pass into exile.

This pestilence rages among the subjects, because the superiors are shutting their eyes to it, as though it were possible to escape the punishment of those whose vice they are tolerating.

OF THE MINISTERS OF GOD'S WORD

CHAPTER CXXII

What manner of man a preacher should be

163. HE would have as ministers of God's word men who should apply themselves to spiritual studies and not be shackled by other duties.

For he used to say that these had been chosen by a great King to deliver to the people the decrees they had heard at His mouth. And he would say: "The preacher should first draw in by secret prayer what he is afterwards to pour forth in sacred discourses; he must rather grow hot within than utter cold words outwardly". He declared that this office is to be reverenced, and that those who minister in it should be respected by all. These (he said) are the life of the body, the assailers of devils, the lantern of the world. But the doctors of sacred theology he deemed to be worthy of more ample honours; for once he caused it to be written as a general order: "We ought to honour and revere all theologians and those who minister to us the words of God as men who minister to us 'spirit and life'". And once when he was writing to blessed Antony he caused these words to be put at the beginning of the letter: "To brother Antony, my Bishop".

CHAPTER CXXIII

Against those who covet empty praise. Exposition of a word of prophecy

164. BUT he declared that those preachers are to be pitied who often sell what they do for the hire of empty praise. And sometimes he would heal the swellings of such men by such an antidote as this: "Why do ye boast of men converted, when it is my simple brethren that have converted them by their prayers?" Finally the text "Until the barren has borne very many" he expounded in this way: "The 'barren' is one of my poor simple brethren who is not

entrusted with the duty of begetting children in the Church. He shall bring forth 'very many' in the Judgment because the Judge shall then reckon to his glory those he is now converting by private prayers. 'She who has many children shall wax feeble,' because the preacher who rejoices in many children gotten, as it were, by his own power, shall then know that he has had nothing of his own in them." Nor did he greatly love those who desire to be praised as orators rather than as preachers, and speak with elegance and not with earnestness. Those again (he said) allot their time ill who spend all on preaching and none on devotion. He had praise indeed for a preacher, but he must be one who at the right season should be wise for himself and taste for himself.

OF HIS CONTEMPLATION OF THE CREATOR[1]

CHAPTER CXXIV

165. THOUGH eager to quit the world as being a place of pilgrimage and exile, this happy traveller was not a little comforted by the things that are in the world. As to the princes of darkness, indeed, he used it for a battlefield; but as to God, for a bright mirror of His goodness. In every piece of workmanship he praised the Craftsman; whatever he found done he referred to the Doer of it. He exulted in all the works of the Lord's hands, and penetrated through those pleasant sights to their life-giving Cause and

[1] *Cf.* I., 80, 81.

Principle. In beautiful things he recognised Him who is supremely beautiful; all good things cried out to him, "He who made us is the Best". Everywhere he followed the Beloved by the traces He has impressed on all things; he made for himself of all things a ladder whereby he might reach the Throne. He embraced all things with an unheard-of rapture of devotion, speaking to them of the Lord and exhorting them to praise Him. He refused to put out lanterns, lamps, or candles, not suffering his hand to dim the brightness which he regarded as a sign of the Eternal Light.

Over rocks he walked reverently out of regard for Him who is called the Rock. When he had to recite the verse "On a rock hast Thou exalted me," he used to say, in order to employ a more reverent expression, "Beneath [my] feet hast Thou exalted me".[1] When the brethren were cutting wood he forbad them to cut down a whole tree, so that it might have hope of sprouting again. He bade the gardener not dig up the outlying parts round the garden, in order that in their seasons the greenness of grass and the beauty of flowers might proclaim the beauteous Father of all things. In the garden he ordered a plot to be set apart for sweet-scented and flowering plants, that they might cause those that should look upon them to remember the Eternal Sweetness. He picked up worms from the way that they might not be trodden on, and ordered honey and the best wine to be provided for bees that they might not perish from want in the cold of winter. He called by the name of brother all animals, though in

[1] *Cf. Spec. Perf.*, 118.

all their kinds the gentle were his favourites. Who is sufficient to tell all these things? For that Original Goodness, which shall be all in all, shone forth already to this Saint as all in all.

CHAPTER CXXV

How the creatures returned his love: and concerning the fire which hurt him not

166. ALL the creatures therefore strove to return the Saint's love and to show their gratitude for his services; they rejoiced in his caresses, granted his requests, and obeyed his commands. Let me relate a few instances. When he was suffering from disease of the eyes and had been induced to submit to treatment, a surgeon was summoned to the place. So he came and brought an iron instrument for cauterization, and ordered it to be put into the fire until it should be red-hot. Then the blessed father, to encourage his body now shaken by horror, spoke thus to the fire: "My brother fire, who dost outvie all other things in splendour, the Most High hath created thee mighty, fair, and useful. Be kind to me at this hour, be courteous, for I have loved thee of old in the Lord. I pray the great Lord who created thee to temper thy heat now so that, burning me gently, I may be able to bear it." Having finished his prayer he made the sign of the cross over the fire, and thenceforth remained undismayed. The surgeon took the glowing iron in his hands: the brethren, yielding to human weakness, fled: the Saint with cheerful readiness exposed himself to

the iron. The iron was plunged hissing into the tender flesh, and the cauterization was slowly made from the ear to the eyebrow. What pain that fire inflicted is declared by the words of the Saint, who knew best what it was, for when the brethren who had fled came back, the father said with a smile: "Faint-hearted and poor-spirited ones, wherefore did ye fly? I tell you of a truth I felt no heat of fire nor any pain in my flesh." Then turning to the doctor: "If the flesh is not well burnt," said he, "apply the iron again". The doctor, whose experience in such cases was very different, proclaimed this as a Divine miracle, saying: "I tell you, brethren, I have seen wondrous things to-day".

I believe that the man to whom at his will cruel things became gentle had returned to primal innocence.

CHAPTER CXXVI

Of the little bird that rested in his hands

167. WHEN S. Francis was crossing the lake of Rieti in a little boat on his way to the hermitage of Greccio, a fisherman presented him with a waterfowl, that he might rejoice over it in the Lord. The blessed father received the bird with joy, and then, opening his hands, gently invited it freely to fly away. The bird would not depart, but rested in his hands as in a little nest, and the Saint remained with his eyes lifted up in prayer. Then, after a long delay, as though coming back to himself from elsewhere, he sweetly told the bird to return without fear to its former

liberty. And so, on receiving this permission, with the holy man's blessing, the bird showed its joy by some motion of its body, and flew away.

CHAPTER CXXVII

Of the falcon

168. WHEN blessed Francis, flying as he was wont from the sight of men and intercourse with them, was dwelling in a certain hermitage, a falcon which was building his nest there joined himself to him in a close alliance of friendship. For always at night the bird by his song and the noise he made gave warning of the hour when the Saint was wont to rise for Divine worship. And this was most pleasing to the Saint of God, because the bird by the great care which he displayed toward him prevented him from being delayed by sloth. But when the Saint was more than usually oppressed by some infirmity the falcon spared him and did not give the signal for matins so early; but (as if taught by God) gently rang his vocal bell about dawn.

No wonder if the other creatures reverenced the chief lover of the Creator!

CHAPTER CXXVIII

Of the bees

169. IN a certain mountain a cell was once made wherein the servant of God performed the most rigid penance for forty days. When he de-

parted thence at the end of that time, the cell, being in a lonely place, remained untenanted; and an earthen vessel, out of which the Saint used to drink, was left there. When some men visited the spot later out of reverence for the Saint, they found the vessel full of bees, who with wondrous skill were building their little cells therein; surely signifying the sweetness of contemplation which the Saint of God had there enjoyed.

CHAPTER CXXIX

Of the pheasant

170. A NOBLEMAN of the territory of Siena sent a pheasant to blessed Francis, who was ill. He received it joyfully, not because he desired to eat it, but in the manner in which he was always wont to rejoice in such creatures for love of the Creator; and he said to the pheasant: "Praised be our Creator, brother pheasant!" and, turning to the brethren, "Let us try now whether brother pheasant will stay with us or go to his usual haunts which are better suited to him". So one of the brethren at the Saint's bidding carried the pheasant and put it in a vineyard far off, but the bird hastened back forthwith to the father's cell. Again S. Francis ordered it to be taken farther away, but it again returned as fast as possible to the cell door, and came in, almost forcing its way under the tunics of the brethren who were at the door. So the Saint ordered the pheasant to be carefully fed, embracing it and caressing it with sweet words. When a certain physician, very devoted to the Saint of God, saw this, he

asked the brethren to let him have the pheasant, not to eat, but to take charge of, out of reverence for the Saint. In short, he took the bird home with him; but the pheasant on being separated from S. Francis altogether refused to eat, as long as he was away from him, just as if a wrong had been done him. The physician was astonished, and immediately carried the pheasant back to the Saint, telling him in order all that had happened. As soon as the bird was put down on the ground and saw its father, it put away its sadness and began to eat joyfully.

CHAPTER CXXX

Of the cicala

171. NEAR the cell of the Saint of God at Portiuncula a cicala used to perch on a fig-tree, singing sweetly. Sometimes the blessed father would hold out his hand to her, and call her kindly to him, saying, "My sister cicala, come to me," and she immediately came up on his hand, as though endowed with reason. Then he said to her: "Sing, my sister cicala, and praise the Lord thy Creator with a joyful song". And without delay she began obediently to sing, and ceased not until the man of God mingled his own praise with her songs, and bade her fly back to her accustomed place, where she remained for eight days in succession, as if bound. When the Saint came down from his cell he always touched her with his hands, and bade her sing, and she was always eager to do his bidding. Then he said to his companions:

"Let us give our sister cicala leave to depart, for she has now gladdened us enough with her praise; that our flesh may not have occasion for vainglory by such things". And forthwith the cicala dismissed by him went away, and never appeared there again. Seeing all this the brethren wondered greatly.

OF HIS CHARITY

CHAPTER CXXXI

Of his charity; and how he set himself as a pattern of perfection for the salvation of souls

172. IF the strength of love had made him a brother to the other creatures it is no wonder if Christ's charity made him more than a brother to those who have been stamped with the Creator's image. For he used to say that nothing is more important than the salvation of souls, often alleging in proof of this that the Only-begotten of God deigned to hang upon the cross for souls. Hence his wrestlings in prayer, his going about preaching, the excessive efforts he made in order to give examples of conduct. He deemed not himself a friend of Christ unless he loved the souls that Christ loved. And this was the chief cause of his reverence for the Doctors,[1] namely, that being Christ's helpers they performed the same office with Him. As for the Brethren, he loved them with an unbounded passionate affection as being of the household of a peculiar faith and united by the fellowship of an eternal inheritance. (173) Whenever the

[1] See above, II., 163.

hardness of his own life was blamed he answered that he had been given to the Order for a pattern, so that like an eagle he might incite his young ones to fly: and accordingly though his innocent flesh, which already was subjecting itself voluntarily to the spirit, needed no scourge for offences committed, still, for example's sake, he renewed his chastisement of it, keeping to these hard ways on account of others alone. And rightly, for more regard is paid to the deeds than to the words of those in authority. It was by deeds, father, that thou didst discourse most sweetly, didst persuade most readily, didst prove most surely. Though they speak with the tongues of men and angels but show no examples of charity they profit me little and themselves not at all. But where there is no dread of the reprover, and self-will takes the place of reason,[1] are seals sufficient for salvation[2]? Yet we should do as they tell us, that the runnels may trickle through scanty channels to little plots of ground. Meanwhile let us gather a rose from among the thorns, so that the greater may do some service to the lesser.

CHAPTER CXXXII

Of his care for his subjects

174. BUT who takes Francis' care for his subjects now? He is ever lifting up his hands to heaven for the true Israelites, and, at times forgetful of

[1] Juvenal, *Sat.* vi., 222.

[2] *I.e.*, though our Superiors be headstrong and void of charity, does the seal or sanction of their official position enable us to get any spiritual good from them? (See Matt. xxiii. 3.)

himself, his brethren's salvation is his first object. Low at the feet of Majesty he is offering the sacrifice of the spirit for his sons, and compelling God to pour benefits upon them. On the little flock he had drawn after him he looks with a loving sympathy full of misgiving, lest after losing the world they may perchance lose heaven too. He reckoned that he would be inglorious unless he made those entrusted to him glorious with him, those whom his spirit was bringing forth with more grievous travail than his mother's when she had borne him.

CHAPTER CXXXIII

Of his compassion for the sick

175. GREAT was his compassion for the sick, and great his care for their needs. If ever the kindness of laytolk sent him electuaries he gave them to the other sick, though he needed them more than they. He entered into the feelings of all the sick, and gave them words of sympathy when he could not give words of help. He would himself eat on fast-days that the sick might not be ashamed to eat, nor was he ashamed of begging for meat through the streets of a town for a sick brother. Yet did he admonish the ailing to bear their wants patiently, and not to cause scandal by their discontent, though everything might not be done to their satisfaction. Accordingly in a certain Rule he caused these words to be written: "I beg all my sick brethren not to be angry or annoyed in their sicknesses either against God or against the brethren. Let them not be too eager in asking for

remedies, nor long overmuch to deliver the flesh which must soon die and which is the soul's enemy. Let them give thanks for all things, so that they may desire to be such as God would have them to be. For those whom God has foreordained to life eternal he disciplines with the goads of scourging and sickness, even as He Himself has said 'I correct and chastise those whom I love'."

176. He once took into a vineyard a sick man whom he knew to be longing to eat grapes, and, sitting down under a vine, himself began to eat first, to encourage the other to eat.

CHAPTER CXXXIV

Of his tenderness toward the weak-hearted: and concerning those that do contrary to this

177. BUT he cherished with greater kindness and upheld with greater patience those sick whom he knew to be "like children tossed to and fro," harassed by temptations, and fainting in spirit. Wherefore he avoided sharp correction (where he saw he might do so without danger) and spared the rod that he might spare the soul. He used to say that it is the proper function of a Superior who is a father and not a tyrant to forestall occasions of delinquency, and not to allow a brother to slip whom if he were wounded it would be hard to lift up. Woe for the pitiable madness of our time! Not only do we fail to raise up or keep back the tottering, but sometimes we push them over. We think nothing of robbing that Chief Pastor

of one little sheep for whom on the Cross He "offered up strong crying with tears". It was otherwise with thee, holy father, who hadst rather amend the erring than ruin them! But we know that the plagues of self-will are more deeply rooted in some, and that for them the cautery is needed and not the ointment: and it is clear that for very many it were more wholesome to be scourged with a rod of iron than to be soothed with the hand. But oil and wine, rod and staff, zeal and pity, ointment and cautery, dungeon and shelter—all have their proper time; the God of vengeance and Father of mercies requires all these things, but yet He would have "mercy rather than sacrifice".

CHAPTER CXXXV

Of the Spanish brethren

178. SOMETIMES this most holy man in wondrous fashion was rapt in God and exulted in spirit when a good odour reached him from his sons. It once happened that a Spaniard, a clerk devoted to God, enjoyed a sight of S. Francis and discourse with him. And among other things concerning the brethren in Spain he gladdened the Saint with this report: "Thy brethren," said he, "in our land, who dwell in a poor little hermitage, have so arranged their way of life that half of them should be busied in domestic cares and half should have leisure for contemplation. (Accordingly every week the active half took the place of the contemplative and the contemplative returned from rest to toilsome

tasks.) One day when the table had been laid and the absent summoned by a signal, all assembled but one who was of the contemplative company. After waiting a little they went to his cell to call him to table; whereas he was being refreshed at a more bountiful table by the Lord. For they found him stretched out on the ground face downward in the manner of a cross, and giving no sign of life by breathing or motion. Two candlesticks were burning at his head and at his feet and lighted up the cell in wondrous fashion with a ruddy light. They left him in peace, that they might not trouble his rapture or 'awake the beloved until she pleased'. So the brethren peeped through the chinks of the cell, standing behind the wall, and looking through the lattice. In brief, whilst 'the friends were hearkening to her that dwelleth in the gardens,'[1] suddenly the light disappeared and the brother became a man again. He arose straightway, came to table, and owned his fault in being late. Thus it came to pass in our land," said the Spaniard. S. Francis could not contain himself for joy at being sprinkled with such a perfume of his sons. He arose forthwith to give praise, and—as if his only glory were to hear good of the brethren—cried with a full heart: "I yield thee thanks, O Lord, Sanctifier and Ruler of the poor, who hast made me glad in hearing such things of my brethren. Bless, I pray, those brethren with Thy most bounteous blessing, and sanctify by a special gift all who by good example cause their profession to be fragrant."

[1] Canticles viii. 13.

CHAPTER CXXXVI

Against those leading an evil life in hermitages: and how he would that all things should be in common

179. THOUGH the preceding story makes us know the Saint's charity which bade him rejoice over the progress of his loved ones, yet we believe that those who lived otherwise in hermitages met with no gentle rebuke: for many turn the abode of contemplation into a place of idleness, and change the hermit-rule, which was devised for perfecting the soul, into a sink of pleasure. The system of the anchorites of these times is that each should live as he pleases. This does not apply to all; for we know that saints living in the flesh are leading exemplary lives as hermits; we know also that the fathers who went before bloomed in solitude. O that the hermits of our time may not degenerate from that primitive beauty the praise of whose righteousness remains for ever!

180. S. Francis, in exhorting all his followers to charity, encouraged them to show to one another the kindness and friendliness of members of a family. "I will," said he, "that my brethren show themselves sons of the same mother, and that if one asks another for a tunic, or cord, or anything else, that other should give it liberally. Let them share their books and all their pleasant things; nay, rather, let one compel another to take them." And lest in this matter he should be speaking of anything which Christ was not working in himself, he was the first to do all these things.

CHAPTER CXXXVII

How he gave his tunic to two French brethren

181. TWO French brethren, men of great sanctity, happened to meet S. Francis. The sight of him gave them untold gladness, and their joy was doubled by their having earnestly desired to see him for a long time. After sweet and affectionate discourse their ardent devotion caused them to ask him for his tunic. He took it off straightway, remaining naked, and most respectfully gave it to them; then, accepting by way of kindly exchange the poorer of their two tunics, he put it on. He was ready not only to give away such things, but even to spend himself as well, and whatever he was asked for he most gladly bestowed.

OF SLANDER

CHAPTER CXXXVIII

How he would have slanderers punished

182. FINALLY, since the spirit filled with charity hates those that are hateful to God, this quality also flourished in S. Francis. Surely he held slanderers in horror and execration above all other kinds of wicked men, saying that they carry poison on their tongues and taint others therewith. Tale-bearers, therefore, as biting fleas, he avoided, and (as we ourselves have seen) turned away his ears when

they were speaking that they might not be defiled by hearing such things. Thus when he once heard one brother blackening the reputation of another, he turned to his vicar, brother Peter Cathanii, and spoke these terrible words: "There is instant danger to the Order unless slanderers are put down. The sweet savour of many will soon stink unless the mouths of the stinking ones are stopped. Arise, arise, examine carefully, and if thou find the accused brother innocent, punish the accuser so severely as to render him a marked man. Hand him over to the Florentine bruiser if thou canst not punish him thyself. (He used to call brother John of Florence, a man of high stature and great strength, 'the bruiser'.) Do thou and all the Ministers give the utmost heed that this pestilent disease spread no further."

Sometimes he sentenced one who had stripped his brother of the glory of his good name to be stripped of his tunic, and suffered him not to lift up his eyes to God unless he had first restored that which he had taken away. Hence it was that the brethren of that time, making as it were a special abjuration of this vice, had firmly agreed together carefully to shun all [discourse] that might detract from the honour of others or redound to their disgrace. Well done, indeed! For what is a slanderer but the gall of humanity, the leaven of wickedness, the infamy of the world? What is a double-tongued man but the scandal of Religion, the poison of the cloister, the breaker-up of unity? Alas! the earth's surface is full of poisonous animals, nor can any good man escape the teeth of envious rivals. Rewards are offered to informers, and when innocence

has been undermined the palm is sometimes given to falsehood. Lo! if any one cannot live by his own honesty he may earn food and clothing by laying waste the honesty of others. (183) Accordingly, S. Francis often used to say: "These are the slanderer's words: 'I lack perfection of life; I have no store of learning or of peculiar grace; and so I have no standing either with God or with men. I know what I will do: I will besmirch the elect and curry favour with those in authority. I know that my Superior is but a man and that at times he follows the same plan as I—to cut down the cedars so that the bramble alone may be seen in the wood.'" [1] Go, wretch, feed on human flesh, and since thou canst not live otherwise, gnaw the entrails of thy brethren! Such men strive to appear good, not to become so; they accuse others of vices, but do not put them away themselves. They praise those alone by whose authority they desire to be cherished; uttering no praises but such as they think will be reported to him they have praised. They trade on the pale face of abstinence for pernicious praises that they may appear spiritual men "who judge all things but themselves are judged by no man". Let them rejoice in the report of sanctity, not in the fact, in the name of angels, not in the power!

[1] See Judges ix. 15.

[S. FRANCIS'] DESCRIPTION OF A MINISTER-GENERAL

CHAPTER CXXXIX

How he ought to bear himself toward his companions

184. NEAR the end of the time of S. Francis' being called to the Lord, a brother, who was always concerned for things Divine, filled with tenderness toward the Order, made request to him, saying: "Father, thou wilt pass away and the family that has followed thee will be left in the vale of tears. Point out some one, if thou knowest any in the Order, on whom thy spirit may rest, and on whom the burden of the office of Minister-General may safely be laid." S. Francis answered, accompanying all his words with sighs: "My son, I see no one sufficient to be leader of an army so manifold, and shepherd of a flock so large. But I will paint for you, and (as the saying is) fashion with my hand, one in whom it may be clearly seen what manner of man the father of this family should be. (185) He should be a man of the highest character, of great discretion, and of praiseworthy reputation: a man without private affections, lest, while he shows favour to a part, he gender scandal in the whole. A man fond of the study of holy prayer, who should assign certain hours of the day to his own soul and certain to the flock entrusted to him. For very early in the morning he should before aught else attend celebrations of mass (*missarum sacramenta debet praemittere*), and in prolonged devotion commend himself and the flock to God's protection. But after prayer let him

appear in public to be heckled by all, ready to give answer to all and to provide for all with meekness. He should be a man who will not commit foulness by accepting persons, and will not care less for the lowly and simple than for the wise or great. A man who, although he may be allowed to excel in the gift of learning, ought in his behaviour rather to 'bear the image' of pious simplicity, and to foster virtue. A man who will execrate money, the chief cause of corruption in our profession and perfection, and who being the head of a poor Religion and offering himself to be copied by the rest will never make wrong use of treasure-chests. For such an one his habit and a little book should suffice as regards himself, and as regards the brethren a box of pens and a seal. Let him not be a collector of books nor much intent on reading, lest he be taking from his office what he is spending by anticipation on study. Let him be a man who, since he is the last refuge of the troubled, can comfort the afflicted; lest, if healing medicines be not found with him, the malady of despair should prevail over the sick. That he may bend the froward to meekness, let him abase himself and waive somewhat of his right, in order to gain a soul for Christ. Let him not shut up his bowels of pity towards those who have forsaken the Order, as if they were sheep who had perished, knowing that the temptations which can drive them to such a fall must be overpowering. (186) I would have him honoured by all in the stead of Christ, and provided for in all necessary things with all good-will. But he ought not to take pleasure in honours nor to delight more in being applauded than in being reviled. If

through weakness or fatigue he should need more palatable food, he should not eat it in private, but in public, so as to relieve other invalids from shame in providing for their bodies. To him chiefly it belongs to examine the secrets of the conscience, and to pluck out the truth from hidden sources; but not to lend an ear to tattlers. Finally he ought to be a man who shall by no means cause the strong fabric of justice to totter through his clinging to power, and shall feel so great an office to be more of a burden than a dignity. Let not excessive gentleness, however, produce apathy, nor mistaken indulgence the breaking-up of discipline; but rather while he is an object of love to all let him none the less be a terror to them that do evil. I would also that he should have companions endowed with goodness, who, even as he himself, should set an example of all good things, men stern against pleasures, strong against hardships, and, in a becoming way, so genial in their demeanour as to welcome all comers with a holy cheerfulness. Such a man (he said) ought the Minister-General of the Order to be."

CHAPTER CXL

Of the Provincial Ministers

187. ALL these qualities the happy father sought for in the Provincial Ministers, though in the Minister-General every one of them ought to be singularly conspicuous. He wished them to be genial toward those beneath them, and to show such gentleness and good-will that delinquents should not be

afraid to trust themselves to their affection. He would have them moderate in their orders, forgiving in cases of offence, readier to suffer wrongs than to pay them back, foes to vice, healers to the vicious. In short he would have them such that their life should be a mirror of discipline for the rest. Yet he would have them treated with all honour and valued, as those who bore the burden of care and toil. He declared that those who should govern the souls entrusted to them according to such a pattern and law deserved the highest rewards with God.

CHAPTER CXLI

What the Saint answered when he was questioned about the Ministers

188. S. FRANCIS being once asked by a certain brother why he had so cast all the brethren out of his own keeping and given them over to strange hands, as though they in nowise belonged to him, replied: "Son, I esteem the brethren as highly as I can; but if they followed my footsteps I should assuredly love them more and not make myself strange to them. For there are some among the number of the Superiors who are drawing them away to other things, putting before them the examples of the ancients, and setting little store by my admonitions. But the end will show what they are doing." And shortly afterwards when he was oppressed by exceeding infirmity he raised himself up on his couch and said in heat of spirit: "Who are they that have snatched the Religion of myself and

the brethren out of my hands? If I get to the chapter-general then I will show them what my will is!" And that brother continued, "Wilt thou not also change those Provincial Ministers that have so long abused their freedom?" And the father made answer, groaning, in these terrible words: "Let them live as they like, for the perdition of a few is a lesser loss than that of many". (He did not say this on account of all the Ministers but on account of some who by the length of time during which they had held office seemed to have claimed an hereditary right to it.) And this he specially commended in the Regular Prelates[1] of every kind: Not to change their behaviour except for the better, not to court popularity, not to exert their power, but to do their duty.

OF HOLY SIMPLICITY

CHAPTER CXLII

What holy simplicity is

189. THE Saint was in some sort more especially careful to show forth in himself and to value in others holy Simplicity, the daughter of Grace, the sister of Wisdom, and the mother of Righteousness. Not every kind of simplicity, however, met with his approval, but that alone which, being content with her God alone, sets at naught all else. She it is who makes her boast in the fear of God and knows not how to do evil or speak it. She it is who examines herself,

[1] *I.e.*, in those who bore office in the Order.

but condemns no one in her judgment, who surrenders to her superior the authority that is his due and covets no authority. She it is who, not deeming Greek glories to be the best, chooses to act, rather than to learn or teach. She it is who in regard to all the laws divine leaves to those that are to perish wordy digressions, ornaments and embellishments, display and curious inquiry, and seeks not for the bark but for the pith, not for the shell but for the kernel, not for many things, but for much, for the supreme and enduring Good. Her did the most holy father require both in lettered and in lay brethren, not deeming her to be the opponent but the true sister of Wisdom, though easier in the getting and readier in the using for those who are poor in learning. Accordingly in the Praises which he composed concerning the virtues he says: "Hail, Queen Wisdom! The Lord save thee with thy sister pure holy Simplicity!"

CHAPTER CXLIII

Of brother John the Simple

190. AS S. Francis was passing near a village by Assisi a very simple man named John who was ploughing in a field came up to him and said: "I wish that thou wouldst make me a Brother, for I have long been desiring to serve God". The Saint rejoiced, as he considered the man's simplicity, and answered gladly: "Brother, if thou wilt become our companion, give to the poor, if thou hast anything, and I will receive thee when thou hast got rid of thy property".

The man straightway loosed the oxen, and offered one to S. Francis. "Let us give this ox to the poor," said he, "for I am worthy to receive so much of my father's goods." The Saint smiled, but approved his simple disposition not a little. When his parents and his little brothers heard this they came running together with tears, grieving more for the loss of the ox than for that of the man. But the Saint said to them: "Be easy in your minds: see, I give you back the ox though I take away the brother!" So he took the man with him, vested him in the garb of the Religion, and, on account of the grace of simplicity which he had, made him his special companion. And so when S. Francis was in any place engaged in meditation, John the Simple would immediately copy in his own person whatever gestures or movements S. Francis made; for if S. Francis spat, he spat; if S. Francis coughed, he coughed; he accompanied the Saint's sighs and weeping by sighing and weeping himself; if the Saint raised his hands to heaven, so did he, observing him diligently as a model and copying everything himself. The Saint noticed this, and asked him once why he did so. "I have promised," said he, "to do all that thou doest; it is dangerous for me to leave anything out." The Saint rejoiced over this pure simplicity, but gently forbade him to act thus any more. And not long afterwards the simple man in that purity of his passed away to the Lord. And, as the Saint would often put forward this man's life for imitation, he would playfully call him not "brother John" but "Saint John".

Observe that it is a characteristic of pious simplicity

to abide by the rule of one's betters and ever to rely on the examples and instructions of the Saints.

Who shall grant to human wisdom to follow him even now that he is reigning in heaven with the zeal wherewith pious Simplicity copied him on earth? What can I add but this: Simplicity followed the Saint in life and went before him into life.

CHAPTER CXLIV

How he fostered unity among his sons, and spoke of it in a parable

191. IT was ever his constant wish and watchful study to preserve among his sons the bond of unity, to the end that those who had been drawn by the same spirit and begotten by the same father might be peacefully nurtured in the bosom of one mother. He would have the greater united to the lesser, the wise joined to the simple by brotherly affection, the distant coupled together by the cement of love. He once put forth a moral parable, containing no little instruction. "Suppose," he said, "that all the Religious who are in the Church are gathered together in one chapter-general. Therefore, since lettered and unlettered are there, learned men and those that without learning know how to please God, one of the wise and one of the simple are appointed to preach. The wise man deliberates (for he is wise) and cogitates thus: 'There is no place for a display of learning here, where men perfect in learning are present; nor would it be in good taste for me to make myself conspicuous for curious disputation by uttering subtleties

before the most subtle men. It will perhaps be more fruitful to speak simply.' The appointed day comes; the assemblies of the saints are gathered together, longing to hear the sermon. The wise man comes forth clothed in sackcloth and with ashes sprinkled on his head; and, to the astonishment of all, cuts his words short, preaching rather by action: 'We have promised great things,' he says, 'greater things have been promised to us, let us keep the former and sigh for the latter. Pleasure is brief, punishment perpetual, the suffering short, the glory infinite. Many are called, few chosen, all rewarded.' The hearers' hearts are touched, they burst into tears, and reverence this truly wise man as a Saint. But the simple man says in his heart: 'The wise man has been beforehand with me in all I was going to say or do! But I know what I will do: I know some verses of the Psalms; I will play the wise man, since the wise man has played the simple one!' The next day's sitting comes: the simple man arises; proposes a psalm as his theme: and, filled with the Spirit of God, discourses in virtue of the inspiration given him by God with such fervour, subtlety and sweetness that all, filled with amazement, may truly say 'God discourses with the simple ones'."

192. This moral parable which the man of God thus put forth he expounded as follows: "Our Religion," he said, "is a very great company, and as it were a general synod, gathered from men in every part of the world living after one pattern. Herein the wise turn to their own advantage that which belongs to the simple, when they see the illiterate with fiery energy seeking heavenly things, and those untaught by men

wise through the Spirit in spiritual things. Herein also the simple make their profit out of the things that belong to the wise, when they see illustrious men who might live in the world gloriously anywhere, humbled to the same degree with themselves. This it is (he said) that makes the beauty of this blessed family to shine forth, whose manifold adornment affords no small pleasure to the father of the family."

CHAPTER CXLV

In what manner the Saint would be shaven

193. WHEN S. Francis was shaved he often said to the barber: "Take care not to make me a large tonsure. For I wish that my simple brethren may have a share in my head."[1] He wished, in a word, that the Religion should be open to the poor and unlettered and not only to the rich and learned. "With God," he said, "there is no acceptance of persons, and the Holy Ghost, the Minister-General of the Religion, rests equally on the poor and simple." He wished to put these words into the Rule, but the sealing which had taken place[2] precluded it.

[1] *I.e.*, he would not have himself distinguished from the rest by a specially large tonsure.

[2] *I.e.*, the confirmation of the Rule by the Bull of Honorius III. (Nov. 29th, 1223).

CHAPTER CXLVI

How he would have great clerks coming to the Order expropriate themselves

194. S. FRANCIS once said that when a great clerk joined the Order he ought in some sort to resign even his learning, in order that, having stript himself of such a possession, he might offer himself naked to the arms of the Crucified. "Learning," he said, "makes many men indocile, not suffering a certain stiffness of theirs to be bent by the discipline of humility. Wherefore I would have a lettered man first of all make this petition to me: 'See, brother, I have lived long in the world, and have never truly known my God. Give me, I pray thee, a place removed from the turmoil of the world where I may grieve over my past years, and where, gathering together the scattered energies of my heart, I may reform my soul for better things.' What, think you, would the man become who should make such a beginning? Verily he would go forth to all things with the strength of a lion unchained, and the blessed juice which he had tasted at the beginning would increase in him with continual profit. Such a man might at last be confidently assigned to the true ministry of the word, because he would pour forth that which was boiling within him."

Pious teaching indeed! For what so necessary for one returning from a very different sphere, as to banish and purge away by exercises in humility the inveterate and deep-seated affections of the world? [Surely] who-

soever should enter into the school of perfection would quickly attain to perfection.

CHAPTER CXLVII

How he would have the brethren to learn; and how he appeared to a companion who was applying himself to preaching

195. S. FRANCIS was grieved if learning were sought to the neglecting of virtue, especially when "each one did not abide in the vocation wherein he was called at the beginning". "My brethren," he said, "who are being led by curiosity after learning, will find their hands empty in the day of retribution. I would rather have them strengthened in the virtues, so that when times of tribulation come they may have the Lord with them in their distress. For tribulation is indeed coming (said he), wherein books shall be thrown into cupboards[1] and hiding-places as useless." He did not say this because the study of Scripture displeased him, but in order to withdraw the brethren in general from being over-anxious to learn, and because he would have them all accomplished in charity rather than smatterers in research. Besides, he foreboded that times were not far off wherein he knew that learning would be an occasion of falling, while the having applied oneself to spiritual things would be a support to the spirit.

[1] *In fenestris.* Or the meaning may be "left on window-sills," or perhaps "thrown out of window". *Fenestra*, besides meaning a window, was used of a cupboard or receptacle for the pyx in which the reserved sacrament was kept.—Du Cange.

A lay brother who wanted to have a psalter and asked S. Francis' leave was offered ashes instead of a psalter.

After his death S. Francis appeared in a vision to one of his companions who was at one time busying himself about preaching, and forbade him to do so, bidding him walk in the way of Simplicity. God is his witness that after this vision he felt such sweetness that for several days the dew of the father's words seemed actually to be dropping into his ears.

OF THE SAINT'S SPECIAL DEVOTIONS

CHAPTER CXLVIII

Of his special devotions, and how he was moved by the mention of "the love of God"

196. IT will perhaps be neither unprofitable nor unfitting to touch briefly on the special devotions of S. Francis. Though as one who enjoyed the unction of the Spirit he was devout in all things, still, he felt a special emotion with regard to certain special things. Among other expressions in common use he could never hear the words "the love of God" without undergoing a kind of transformation; for immediately on hearing those words he was aroused, stirred, inflamed, as though some inner chord of his heart were being touched by the plectrum of an outward voice. He declared that to offer such payment as "the love of God" in exchange for alms was a noble prodigality, and that those who valued it at less than money were most

foolish. For himself, he kept unfailingly until his death the resolution he had made while yet mixed up with the things of the world, never to refuse any poor man who asked him for anything for the love of God.

For once when a poor man asked him for something "for the love of God," and he had nothing, he stealthily took scissors and hastened to divide his tunic with him; which thing he would have done, had he not been detected by the brethren; whereupon he caused the poor man to be otherwise provided for. "The love of Him who loved us much, is much to be loved," he said.

CHAPTER CXLIX

Of his devotion to the angels; and what he used to do for love of S. Michael

197. THE angels, who are with us in our warfare, who walk with us amid the shadow of death, S. Francis venerated with the utmost affection. He used to say that everywhere they are companions to be revered, but, none the less, also guardians to be called upon. He taught that their presence must not be outraged, and that we ought not to presume to do before them what we should not do before men. And forasmuch as the psalmody in the choir was performed in the angels' sight, he desired that all who could should come together to the oratory, and there sing with wisdom. He would often say that S. Michael should receive more excellent honour for that he had the office of presenting souls [before God]; and in honour of S. Michael he used to fast most devoutly for forty

days between the Feast of the Assumption and the Feast of S. Michael; for he said: "Every one should make some special offering of praise or of gift to God in honour of so great a Prince".

CHAPTER CL

Of his devotion to our Lady, to whom he specially committed the Order

198. TO the Mother of Jesus he bore unspeakable love, for that she made the Lord of Majesty our brother. To her he rendered peculiar praises, poured forth prayers, and made offerings of affection, the number and quality whereof the tongue of man could not express. But—what most rejoices us—he constituted her the Advocate of the Order and placed beneath her wings the sons whom he was about to leave, that she might cherish and protect them unto the end.

O Advocate of the poor, fulfil thou to us the office of Protectress until the time foreordained of the Father!

CHAPTER CLI

Of his devotion to the Nativity of the Lord; and how he would have all creatures cared for at that season

199. HE observed with ineffable eagerness the Nativity of the child Jesus above all other festivals, declaring that it was the feast of feasts, whereon God, become a tiny infant, hung upon a human breast. He cherished with hungry thoughts the image

of those infant limbs, and his compassion for the Child, which flooded his heart, made him even lisp words of sweetness, as infants do. When there was a talk of not eating flesh, because it was a Friday, he answered brother Morico, saying: "Thou sinnest, brother, in calling the day on which a Child has been born to us Friday. I would," said he, "that the very walls should eat flesh on such a day, or, if they cannot, that they should at any rate be greased outside!"

200. On that day he would have the poor and hungry feasted by the rich, and oxen and asses indulged with extra corn and hay. "If I can have speech of the Emperor," he said, "I will beseech him that a general ordinance may be made that all who can are to scatter corn and grain on the ways so that on a day of such high festival the little birds may have plenty, especially our sisters the larks." He would recall, not without tears, with what penury the poor Virgin was compassed about on that day. Thus while he was once sitting at dinner, a brother spoke of the blessed Virgin's poverty, and called to mind the need of Christ, her son. Straightway S. Francis rose from table, and with grievous sobbing and plenteous tears ate the rest of his bread on the bare ground.

He used to say that that was a royal virtue which shone so excellently in the King and in the Queen. And also when the brethren in private were deliberating which virtue made one the most a friend to Christ, he would answer, as though opening the secret of his heart: "Know ye, my sons, that Poverty is a special way of salvation, whose fruit is manifold, and well known to few".

CHAPTER CLII

Of his devotion to the Lord's Body

201. TOWARD the Sacrament of the Lord's Body he glowed with the fervour of all his being, marvelling at the thought of that loving condescension, of that most condescending love. He deemed it to be treating the Sacrament with no small contempt if, having leisure, he did not hear at least one mass daily. He often communicated, and that so devoutly as to make others devout. Attending on that reverend Ordinance with all reverence, he offered the sacrifice of all his members; and as he received the immolated Lamb, he immolated his spirit with the fire that was ever burning on the altar of his heart. Therefore he loved France as the friend of the Lord's Body, and longed to die there by reason of her reverence for hallowed things. At one time he determined to send brethren throughout the world with precious pyxes in order that wheresoever they might observe the Price of our Redemption unmeetly kept, they might deposit it in the best place possible. It was his will that great reverence should be shown to the priestly hands which in the offering of that Sacrifice have been invested with an authority so Divine; and he used often to say: "If I chanced to meet at the same time any Saint coming from heaven, and any poor priest, I would do honour to the presbyter first, and would sooner go to kiss his hands; and I would say [to the other], 'Oh, wait, S. Lawrence! for this

man's hands handle the Word of Life, and possess something that is more than human'".

CHAPTER CLIII

Of his devotion to the relics of the Saints

202. THE beloved man, who showed himself most attentive to Divine worship, left nothing that pertains to God dishonoured by neglect. When he was at Monte Casale, in the province of Massa, he bade the brethren most reverently to remove the sacred relics from an abandoned church to a "place" of the brethren, for he was deeply grieved that they should now for a long time have been defrauded of their due devotion. But having been obliged to go elsewhere, his sons, heedless of their father's bidding, neglected the merit of obedience. One day when they were preparing to celebrate, they removed the cloth from the altar, as is customary, and found thereon fair and fragrant bones. They were greatly amazed as they looked upon things they had never seen before. The Saint of God returned soon after and inquired diligently whether they had done his bidding concerning the relics. The brethren humbly confessed that they were guilty of having neglected his command, and received pardon together with punishment. And the Saint said: "Blessed be the Lord my God, who of Himself has fulfilled that which ye ought to have done".

Mark diligently herein Francis' devotion, give heed to God's good pleasure concerning our dust, and

magnify the praise of holy obedience. For God complied with the prayers of him whose voice man obeyed not.

CHAPTER CLIV

Of his devotion to the Cross, and of a certain hidden mystery (*sacramentum*)

203. FINALLY, who might comprehend, who express how far he was from glorying save in the Cross of the Lord? To him alone was it given to know, to whom alone it was given to experience. Verily even though through some sense we should in ourselves perceive these things, words, defiled as they are by their use in the expression of the common things of every day, would be utterly wanting to declare such wonders. And perchance it was for the very reason that it could not have been unfolded in speech that that thing had to be laid open in his flesh. Let silence therefore speak where language fails, because even the thing signed cries out where the sign fails. Be this alone announced to human ears, that it is not yet wholly clear wherefore that mysterious thing appeared in the Saint; for, as revealed by him, it derives its reason and purpose from the future.[1] He shall prove true and trustworthy whose witnesses shall be Nature, the Law and Grace.

[1] See above, I., 90.

OF THE POOR LADIES

CHAPTER CLV

How he would have the brethren behave themselves toward them

204. IT is not meet to leave unmentioned the spiritual building (much nobler than the earthly one) which the blessed father, guided by the Holy Ghost, founded in that place [1] for the increasing of the city on high, after he had repaired the material church. It is not to be believed that it was for the repair of a tottering structure, destined in any case to perish, that Christ spoke to him from the wood of the Cross, and that in a manner so astounding as to fill those that hear of it with awe and grief: but, even as the Holy Ghost had foretold in the past, the Order of Holy Virgins was to be established there; which Order (like a polished heap of living stones) was one day to be brought thither for the replenishing of the house in the heavens. But after that the Virgins of Christ began to assemble in that place, and to be gathered together from divers parts of the world, vowing most perfectly to observe the deepest poverty, and to adorn themselves with every virtue; though their father gradually withdrew his bodily presence from them, still he extended to them his affectionate care in the Holy Ghost. For when by many tokens of perfection he knew them to be approved and ready to bear the loss of all things for Christ, and to endure toil, and never to decline from

[1] *I.e.*, at S. Damian. See above, I., 18; II., 10, 13.

the holy commandments, he promised ever stedfastly to bestow the help and counsel of himself and his brethren on them and on others who should profess poverty in a similar way of life; which thing he diligently performed as long as he lived, and, when nigh unto death, commanded to be evermore performed, and that not negligently, declaring that it was one and the same spirit that had led the brethren and those Poor Ladies forth from this world.

205. When the brethren sometimes wondered why S. Francis did not more frequently visit such holy Handmaids of Christ with his bodily presence, "Think not, dear brethren," said he, "that I love them not perfectly; for if it were a fault to cherish them in Christ, was it not a greater fault to have united them to Christ? And, indeed, it had been no wrong not to call them, but not to care for them when called were the utmost unkindness. But I am giving you an example, that as I am doing, so ye should also do. I will not that any of you should of his own accord offer to visit them; but I order that unwilling and most reluctant men, provided they be spiritual and approved by a long and worthy life, be appointed for their service."

CHAPTER CLVI

How he reprimanded certain brethren who liked going to nunneries

206. ONCE accordingly when a brother who had two daughters of perfect conversation in a nunnery said that he would gladly be the bearer to

that place of some trifling gift on the Saints' behalf, the Saint rebuked him very sharply, inculcating words not now meet to be reported. And so he sent the present by another who refused to go, but did not obstinately persist in his refusal.

Another brother went in winter to a nunnery on some errand of compassion without being aware of the Saint's strong objection to such a visit. When the fact became known to the Saint, he made that brother walk several miles naked when the snow was deep upon the ground.

CHAPTER CLVII

Of the sermon he preached by example rather than by word

207. THE holy father who had been often entreated by his Vicar that he would, when abiding at S. Damian, set forth God's word to his daughters, was at length overcome by the Vicar's urgency, and consented to do so. When the Ladies were gathered together as usual to hear the word of God (but not less in order to see their father) he raised his eyes to heaven, where his heart ever was, and began to pray to Christ. Then he ordered ashes to be brought, and having spread some of them on the ground in a circle round him, placed the remainder on his head. They waited for him to begin, but as he remained in persistent silence within the circle of ashes, no small astonishment arose in their hearts. Then the Saint suddenly stood up, and to their amazement repeated by way of sermon [the Psalm] "*Have mercy on me,*

O God," and having finished it went out in haste. By the power of this symbolic preaching the Handmaids of God were filled with such contrition that they shed abundant tears and scarce refrained from punishing themselves with their own hands. He taught them by his action to repute themselves ashes, and that naught but what befitted such repute entered his heart concerning them. Such was his conversation with the holy women; such his visitation of them, most profitable indeed, but compulsory and rare. This was his will for all the brethren: that while serving those Ladies for the sake of Christ whose handmaids they are, they should, even as full-fledged birds, ever be on their guard against the snares placed before them.

OF HIS COMMENDATION OF THE RULE OF THE BRETHREN

CHAPTER CLVIII

Of blessed Francis' commendation of the Rule; and of a brother who carried it about with him

208. HE was full of the most ardent zeal for the common Profession and Rule, and on such as should be zealous concerning it he bestowed a singular blessing. For this Rule he declared to be for his brethren the book of life, the hope of salvation, the marrow of the Gospel, the way of perfection, the key of Paradise and the covenant of an eternal alliance. He would that all should have it, that all should know it, and that it should everywhere speak to the inner man for consolation in weariness and for a memorial of

the plighted oath. He taught them ever to keep it before their eyes to remind them of the life they should lead, and, what is more, that they should die with it. Not unmindful of this teaching, a certain lay-brother, who we believe is to be honoured among the number of the martyrs, won the palm of a glorious victory. For as he was being haled to martyrdom by the Saracens, he bowed his knees humbly and said to his companion, holding the Rule in his uplifted hands: "Of all the things that I have done against this holy Rule, dearest brother, in the sight of God's Majesty and in thy sight I proclaim myself guilty". This brief confession was followed by the sword, by the which martyrdom he ended his life: and afterwards he became renowned through signs and wonders. He had entered the Order so young that he could scarcely bear the fasting prescribed by the Rule; but yet, though still a little boy, he wore a corslet of mail next his skin. Happy boy, who began happily in order to finish still more happily!

CHAPTER CLIX

A vision, tending to the commendation of the Rule

209. THE most holy father once saw a vision, consisting in a heavenly miracle, which related to the Rule.

At the time when the brethren were conferring together touching the confirmation of the Rule, S. Francis, who was very anxious about this matter, saw the following vision: It seemed to him that he had gathered

from the ground tiny crumbs of bread, which he had to distribute to many famished brethren standing round him. And as he dreaded to distribute such minute crumbs, fearing lest such fine dust should fall out of his hands, there came a voice from on high, which cried: "Francis, make one host out of all the crumbs, and give it to eat to all who will". And when he did so, those who received not the gift devoutly, or despised it when they had received it, presently appeared branded with the taint of leprosy. In the morning he related all these things to his companions, grieving that he could not understand the mystery of the vision. But soon afterwards, as he was watching in prayer, this voice came to him from heaven: "Francis, the crumbs of the past night are the words of the Gospel, the host is the Rule, the leprosy is wickedness".

The brethren of those times who were in everything eager to perform more than was enjoined deemed not this faith which they had sworn to obey to be hard or harsh. For listlessness and idleness find no place where the goad of love is ever urging on to greater achievements.

OF S. FRANCIS' INFIRMITIES

CHAPTER CLX

How he took counsel with a certain brother about caring for his body

210. AMID countless labours and grievous sicknesses, Francis, God's herald, trod in the footprints of Christ, nor did he draw back his foot until he

had even more perfectly accomplished that which he had perfectly begun. For though he was enfeebled and wholly shattered in body, he never halted in his pursuit of perfection, never suffered himself to relax the rigour of discipline; and even now that his body was worn out he could not give it even a little relief without some murmuring of conscience. Therefore when it became necessary even against his will to ease his bodily distresses (which were beyond his strength to bear) with some soothing remedies, he called one of the brethren, who he knew would give him expedient counsel, and said kindly to him: "What thinkest thou, dearest son, of the frequent murmuring of my conscience touching the care of my body? It fears lest I be over-indulgent to the body in its sickness and lest I be eager to relieve it with delicacies carefully sought out. Not that it can take anything with pleasure now that it is worn by long infirmity and that all incitement of taste has gone." (211) The son (recognising that the words of his answer were being given him by the Lord) made heedful reply to the father saying: "Tell me, father, if thou deignest to do so, with what diligence thy body, while it could, obeyed thy behests?" "I bear it witness, my son," answered S. Francis, "that it has been obedient in all things and has spared itself in nothing but has (as it were) rushed headlong to obey all commands. It has shirked no toil, has refused no discomfort, if only it might do as it was bid. Herein have I and it been in perfect agreement, that we should serve Christ the Lord without any reluctance." And the brother said: "Where, then, father, is thy liberality? where thy compassion and thine eminent discretion?

Is it a worthy rewarding of faithful friends to accept a kindness gladly, and then in the time of his need not to requite the giver's merit? How could'st thou have served Christ thy Lord all this time without the help of the body? Has it not, as thou thyself allowest, exposed itself to every danger, for the sake of this very thing?" "I confess, my son," said the father, "that this is most true." Then said the son: "Is it reasonable that thou shouldest be wanting in such great need to so faithful a friend who has for thy sake exposed himself and what is his even unto death? Be it far from thee, father, stay and staff of the afflicted: be this sin against the Lord far from thee." "Blessed be thou, also, my son," he answered, "who hast wisely ministered such salutary remedies to my scruples." And he began joyfully to address his body thus: "Rejoice, brother body, and forgive me, for behold now I gladly fulfil thy desires, and gladly hasten to attend to thy complaints." But what could delight his frail and exhausted body now? What could sustain that which had given way on every side? Francis was now dead to the world, but Christ was living in him. The world's delights were a cross to him, because he bore Christ's cross rooted in his heart. And therefore did the stigmata shine outwardly in his flesh because within that deeply planted root was sprouting in his mind.

CHAPTER CLXI

That which the Lord promised to him instead of his infirmities

212. IT was wonderful that his strength held out to bear the sufferings in every part which had so exhausted him. But these, his distresses, he described by the name not of pains but of "sisters". There is no doubt that they proceeded from many causes. Verily, to the end that triumphs might increase his renown, means whereby he might triumph were now being afforded to the tried veteran to whom even when a recruit the Most High had committed difficult tasks. Herein also his followers may take example by him, for age did not make him any more sluggish nor infirmity any more self-indulgent in all he did. Nor was it for nothing that his purgation was completed in the vale of tears; for thus he might give account even to "the uttermost farthing" in case anything that might be burned [1] yet remained in him, and so at last, having been perfectly cleansed, he might take his flight to heaven without delay. But the strongest reason for his torments I take to be that (as he himself used to say concerning others) in the bearing of them "there is great reward".

213. For one night when he was more wearied than usual by the different grievous pains caused by his infirmities, he began in the depth of his heart to feel some pity for himself. But (lest that ready spirit should in anything yield carnal consent to the flesh

[1] See 1. Cor. iii. 12-15.

even for an hour) by praying to Christ he preserved the shield of patience unmoved.

And at length as he prayed amid the conflict, there was vouchsafed to him from the Lord the promise of eternal life under this similitude: "If the whole bulk of the earth and machine of the world were gold beyond price, and if in exchange for the heavy sufferings thou art enduring all thy pain were removed, and there were given thee for a reward a treasure of glory in comparison whereof the aforesaid gold should be nothing, and unworthy even to be named, wouldst not thou rejoice and gladly bear what thou art bearing now?" "I should rejoice indeed," said the Saint; "yea, and above measure I should rejoice." "Exult, then," said the Lord to him, "for thy sickness is the earnest of My kingdom, and do thou, secure and confident through the merit of patience, await the inheritance of that kingdom." But with what exultation, thinkest thou, did the man rejoice who was blessed by so happy a promise? With what patience, nay more with what love, believest thou that he welcomed bodily sufferings? He now knows perfectly; but then it was impossible for him to utter it. However, he did tell some little of it, as he could, to his companions. Then it was that he composed certain "Praises concerning the Creatures," inciting them in some sort to praise the Creator.

OF THE PASSING OF THE HOLY FATHER

CHAPTER CLXII

How at the end he encouraged the brethren and blessed them

214. "IN man's end," saith the Wise Man, [1] "his works are laid bare;" which we see to have been gloriously fulfilled in this Saint. For after running the way of God's commandments with alacrity of mind, and passing by successive steps through all the virtues, he attained the highest point, and having been brought to perfection, like a plastic work, beneath the hammer of manifold tribulation, beheld every end fully attained. For then did his wondrous works shine the brightest, then did it blaze forth by the token of truth that his whole life had been divine, when having trampled on the allurements of the mortal life he took his free flight on high. For he deemed it a disgrace to live for the world; "he loved his own unto the end"; and he welcomed death with singing. For as he was drawing nigh to his last days, wherein the light perpetual was succeeding to the temporal light that had been withdrawn,[2] he showed by an effectual example that he had nothing in common with the world. For, worn out as he was by that grievous sickness which was the end of all his sufferings, he bade that he should be laid naked on the bare ground, that in that last hour wherein the enemy could yet rage against him, he might wrestle naked with his naked foe. Truly the brave warrior was awaiting his

[1] Ecclus. xi. 27 (Vulgate, xi. 29.)
[2] See above, I., 108.

triumph and with clasped hands was seizing the crown of righteousness. Laid thus on the ground, his garment of sackcloth having been removed, he raised his face (as he was wont) to heaven, and, wholly intent on that [celestial] glory, he covered with his left hand the wound in his right side, that it might not be seen. And he said to the brethren, "I have done my duty, may Christ teach you yours". (215) At the sight of these things the brethren poured forth streams of tears, and heaved heavy sighs from their inmost heart, overcome by their exceeding grief and compassion. Meantime, when their sobs were somewhat abated, his warden, with truer knowledge, through Divine inspiration, of the Saint's wish, hastily rose, took the tunic, the drawers, and the little cap of sackcloth, and said to the father: "Know that this tunic, these drawers, and this cap have been lent thee by me by order of holy obedience; but that thou mayest know that thou hast no property in them I deprive thee of all power of giving them to any one". S. Francis rejoiced and exulted for gladness of heart, for he saw that he had kept faith with the Lady Poverty even to the end.

For he had done all this from zeal for Poverty; so that he would not even that his habit should be his own at the end, but as it were lent by another. (Now he wore the cap of sackcloth on his head to cover the scars which had been produced by the treatment he had undergone for the malady of his eyes; whereas he rather needed a smooth cap of the choicest and softest wool).

216. After this, the Saint raised his hands to heaven and magnified his Christ, for that now, having been dis-

charged from all things, he was going to Him a free man. And in truth, that he might show himself a true imitator in all things of Christ his God, he loved unto the end the brethren and sons whom he had loved from the beginning. For he caused all the brethren present in that place to be called to him, soothed them with comforting words concerning his death, and with fatherly affection exhorted them to the love of God. He spoke at large concerning patience and the maintaining of poverty, putting the Holy Gospel before all other ordinances. Then, as all the brethren sat around, he stretched forth his right hand over them and laid it upon the head of each one, beginning with his Vicar, and, in the persons of those that were there, he blessed also all the brethren living everywhere in the world, and those that should come after them even until the end of the world. Let no one claim for himself this blessing which the Saint pronounced on those who were present on behalf of those who were absent. The blessing, as set forth elsewhere, had a certain special significance, but chiefly in regard to deprivation of office.[1]

[1] Brother Elias, here referred to as the Saint's Vicar, had been deposed from the office of Minister-General in 1239, and had been excommunicated by Gregory IX. and by his successor Innocent IV. The author therefore in referring to the passage above, I., 108 (which see) here declares in effect that the special blessing on Elias was not indefeasible, but had been forfeited by him; and that the only part of the Saint's words as there recorded applicable to him now is the vague prediction of tribulation and scandal to come.

CHAPTER CLXIII

Of his death, and what he did before his death

217. SO while the brethren were weeping bitterly and inconsolably lamenting, the holy father ordered bread to be brought to him: and he blessed it and brake it and handed to each one a morsel to eat. He was calling to mind that most sacred Supper which the Lord last celebrated with his disciples: and it was in reverent memory of Him that he did all this, to show forth the love he bore to the brethren. The few days that remained before he passed away he spent in praise; teaching his dearly loved brethren to praise Christ with him. Moreover, he invited all creatures to praise God; and in certain words which he had composed before exhorted them to the love of God. For he even exhorted Death herself, terrible and hateful to all, to give praise; and joyfully going to meet her, he invited her to lodge with him, saying: "Welcome, my sister Death". And to the physician he said: "Brother physician, boldly foretell that death is at hand, for it will be the gate of life to me". To the brethren: "When ye shall see my end approaching, lay me naked on the ground, even as ye saw me three days ago, and let me lie there when dead for so long a time as one might take to walk a mile gently". So the hour came, and all the mysteries of Christ having been fulfilled in him, he took his happy flight to God.

CHAPTER CLXIV

Of a vision that brother Augustin saw on his deathbed

218. AT that time the Minister of the brethren in Terra di Lavoro was brother Augustin, and he, being at his last hour, and having for a long time lost his speech, suddenly cried out in the hearing of the bystanders and said: "Wait for me, father, wait! See, I am now coming with thee!" And when the brethren, greatly wondering, asked to whom he was speaking, he confidently answered, "See you not our father Francis, who is going to heaven?" And forthwith his holy soul, released from the flesh, followed the most holy father.

CHAPTER CLXV

How the holy father, after he had passed away, appeared to one of the brethren

219. IN that night and at that hour, the glorious father appeared to another of the brethren (a man of praiseworthy life who was then absorbed in prayer) clothed in a purple dalmatic, and followed by a countless multitude of men, from which multitude several detached themselves, and said to that brother, "Is not this Christ, brother?" And he replied, "It is He". Others again asked him, "Is not this S. Francis?" And the brother gave the like answer "that it was he". Truly it seemed to the brother and to all the multitude that the person of Christ and of

S. Francis was one, a judgment which seems by no means temerarious to those of sound understanding, since he who cleaves to God becomes one spirit with Him, and God Himself shall be all in all. At length the blessed father with that wondrous crowd came to a delightsome place, watered with the most limpid streams, verdant with the fairest plants, radiant with the beauty of flowers and filled with every pleasant kind of trees. A palace was there, of wondrous size and singular beauty, which the new denizen of heaven entered eagerly; he found there very many brethren and began to feast with delight in their company at a table most splendidly set out, and covered with various dainties.

CHAPTER CLXVI

The bishop of Assisi's vision concerning the passing of the holy father

220. WHEN the bishop of Assisi, who had gone on a pilgrimage at that time to the Church of S. Michael,[1] was lodging at Benevento on his way back, the blessed father Francis on the night of his death appeared to him in a vision, and said to him: "See, father I am leaving the world and going to Christ". When he arose in the morning the bishop told his companions what he had seen, sent for a notary, and set down the day and hour of the passing [of the Saint]. Then, filled with sorrow, and bedewed

[1] See above, p. 134, *n.*

with tears, he bewailed the loss of his chiefest father. And so, on his return to his own city, he related all things in order and yielded boundless thanks to God for His gifts.

CHAPTER CLXVII

A prayer of the Saint's companions to him

221. BEHOLD, O our blessed father, we have in our simplicity zealously striven in some sort to praise thy splendid deeds, and, for thy glory's sake, to publish some few of the countless acts of power wrought by thy holiness. We know that our words, unequal as they are to record the mighty acts of such perfection, have deprived thy exploits of much of their splendour. We beseech thee and our readers to balance our affection against our attempt and to rejoice that human pens are surpassed by the loftiness of thy wondrous character. For who, O thou pre-eminent among the Saints, might frame within himself or impress on others an idea of the ardour of thy spirit? Who should be able to conceive of those unspeakable emotions which flowed without intermission from thee to God? But we have written these things delighting in the sweet memory of thee, which so long as we live we endeavour to set forth to others even though with stammering lips. Thou, erstwhile famished, now feedest on the fatness of corn; thou, formerly athirst, now drinkest of the torrent of pleasure. But we believe that thou art not so inebriated by the abundance of the House of God as to have forgotten thy children, since even He, of whom

thou drinkest, is mindful of us. Draw us therefore to thee, O worthy father, that we may "run after the odour of thine ointments"[1]—we whom thou seest lukewarm in sloth, languid in idleness, half-alive in negligence. The "little flock" is following thee now with faltering steps; the dazzled sight of their weak eyes cannot bear the beams of thy perfection. Renew our days as at the beginning, O mirror and pattern of the perfect, and suffer not those who resemble thee by their profession to be unlike thee in their life.

222. Lo now we lay our humble prayers before the clemency of the Eternal Majesty on behalf of Christ's servant our Minister, thy successor in holy humility, thy emulator in true poverty, who for thy Christ's sake is taking zealous care of thy sheep with tender affection. And do thou, O holy one, so advance and encompass him that he may ever cleave to thy footsteps and obtain for ever the praise and glory which thou hast gotten.

223. We beseech thee also, O kindest father, with all our heart's affection, for this thy son who now and before has devoutly written thy praises. He, together with us, offers and dedicates to thee this little work which he has put together not indeed in a manner worthy of thy merits, but with dutiful affection in the measure of his strength. Deign to keep and to deliver him from all evil, increase in him holy merits, and, by thy prayers join him for ever to the fellowship of the Saints.

224. Remember, father, the whole congregation of thy sons, who, harassed by inexpressible perils are

[1] See Canticles, i. .

following thy footsteps—at how great a distance thou O most holy one knowest perfectly. Give them strength to resist. Purify them, that they may shine. Cheer them, that they may enjoy. Obtain that "the spirit of grace and supplications" may be poured upon them; that they may have the true humility thou hadst, that they may keep the poverty thou heldest, that they may win the charity wherewith thou didst ever love Christ crucified; Who with the Father and the Holy Ghost liveth and reigneth world without end. Amen.

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